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# SPLENDOURS AND MISERIES



*by the same author*

★

DANCE OF THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

PRIMITIVE SCENES AND FESTIVALS

LA VIE PARISIENNE

VALSE DES FLEURS

THE ROMANTIC BALLET

*(with Cyril W Beaumont)*

THE HOMING OF THE WINDS

*Sacheverell Sitwell*

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**SPLENDOURS**  
*and*  
**MISERIES**



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'Sabbathai Zevi in festive attire' on page 142 is taken from an old woodcut.

# PART ONE

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## Book One THE PORTENTS

### 1. The Prelude

WE are come to the cure, or meeting place of the waters. It lies, deep in trees, between two windings of the river. You see it from the road, down below you, with its many roofs. They are of slate or tiles, all shining from the shower. Already, in the suburbs, you notice the name plates of doctors at the sides of their front doors. Then, the better shops begin, and you come to the hotels. The whole town is a place of detention or a softened prison. Once you reach here, it is for a term of weeks or months, often to be repeated every year you live. It is for the sick and ailing, or for invalids in their own imaginations. And so you arrive at your hotel, for there are hotels for all pockets, where the proprietor puts you in touch instantly with your doctor and sends out for your diet sheet. And here you remain for your allotted time.

But we have to create for such conditions the most poignant of circumstances. For the cure is not for ourselves. But we will come out of the hotel. We must altogether disembody our own personality in order to give expression to this misery. It takes one, swift and sudden, in the hall among the lifeless newspapers. We turned their pages, heedless and unnoticing, so many times before, while we waited for the doctor to come downstairs. To-day, there is no doctor, no waiting while a little hope is left. Outside, there is the bright sunlight that comes after a shower, a hard light that insists, as it were, upon a breaking with the past.

A little alley leads into the main street of the town. Here is the square or 'place'. At one end is a big café and the casino. Much money has been spent by the municipality upon flowerbeds and windowboxes. And an asphalt path, roofed all along its length from columns of cast iron, runs like a way of pilgrimage from kiosk to kiosk where the waters spring, traversing in this manner the whole extent of three sides of the square, and leaving the café or casino to be reached or abandoned with dryshod feet. Those kiosks are glass pavilions where attendants, dressed like peasant girls, serve the waters and keep, numbered and in wicker boxes, the tumblers of those who are willing to pay for this attention. Round the square lie the chief hotels, but, somehow, a discrepancy in time divides them from this covered walk, these glass pavilions, from the flowerbeds, the alleys of clipped limes, and from the shops of the confectioners that, in their sweets and in their choice of names, go back to an earlier day. The hotels exhibit a few of their guests, nondescript figures



## Vichy

who lounge on easy chairs, under the verandah, and stare at the passers by. They, indeed, form the anachronism of this scene. Their inert insensibility is in contrast to what is playing before their eyes. For their stupid curiosity is the bane or evil of this interior drama.

Nothing but the rags and tatters of that past are of comfort in this affliction. For we are back again in those long moments when someone lay dying, when we walked to while away the time, and in order to waste the last hours. The living were inept and horrible, only dead things held some comfort. And so it continues, until the dying meet their death, from which moment only living things hold out any hope. The past, even of yesterday, is but rags and bones. We have not come to that. And, at once, we are wandering again in that intermediate time.

We drop back into it with a sinking or chilling of the heart. It is now, and to-morrow, that will be terrible. The past is but the blue sky out of the prison window. It shines through all weathers, and its colours are illusory, for even the prison rain falls out of the sky. But prison is not a bed of sickness. It is a purgatory: it corrupts or purifies. This is but an anteroom, a waiting place. You are summoned when you are wanted. No one knows what waits within.

In the meantime, we must breathe and move among the living. We are driven out into the streets. And always, every time, the only escape is into that near past, the past that nearly touches our own hands. Now it is peculiar to pathos that its concern is with little things. It is detail that is pathetic, not the fabric or façade of sadness. But the fantasies built by our own unhappiness crumble and fall so easily into dull fact. That thing which is the truth aches and aches. It never gives a lull or pause. And the truth is that someone is about to die. It matters not who. But this allegory demands a death before it starts. It must be the death of some one, or something, final and irremediable. Nothing can ever be the same again. After it is over, we shall have to begin our lives anew. What can this end of all things be? In each individual case it can be personified in terms of that loss which would be most poignant to the person concerned. It can be mother, wife, or sweetheart, child, or lover, whichever would be missed the most. But, also, this death can transcend all things of person. It can be a whole world dying.

A thing has been lost which cannot be recovered. It is necessary to descend into hell in order to bring it back. This present scene is, therefore, the purgatory or place of waiting. We have chosen for it a town which is famous for its waters, and which has become, owing to present circumstances, a synonym for weakness and indecision. For treachery of the spirit and for senile decay. And it is a condition which affects even the temporary inhabitants of the town, who have come to take the waters. The permanent population, doctors, shopowners, hotel-keepers, are servants or shareholders in this place of detention. It is not their policy to effect a perfect cure. This would not be in their interest. The visitors must return to drink the waters. They must wander on a chain, as though tethered to the sources. Or it is a hobbling rope. But many persons grow

## *The sign 'To Let'*

to like their purgatory It flatters them The strict diet makes it into a spell of spiritual recuperation in some religious retreat It seems to improve and purify A chill hand touches them, which they mistake for youth or health But few persons are unhappy here Some are warned, but take no care There are a band and a string orchestra to soothe the nerves shops with forbidden foods the apparatus of soft luxury In hired rooms for it is worth no one's while to take a house

In purgatory, there are beds of stone and beds of featherdown But only for a season The sign 'To Let' is symbol of the town But enough has been said of this unhappy anteroom For it will be no more, in retrospect, than a one night stopping place, a break between two journeys

For ourselves, it is the place of weeping Of future and present import Here we embark upon the Golden Age, or Age of Gold Who, then, was that person who lay dying? In a hotel bedroom, perhaps hurried, thence, into a nursing home To die in cotton sheets the brush the comb the mummy gown a noise of hammering into nothing . . night without end

And, at once, the allegory begins to grow

For there can be divination from the shaking of a bowl of water Or from the stirrings of a little flame From anything that will fix the eyes, and put the mind into a trance It is the suspension between sleeping and waking, when music can be interpreted in its true meaning When it is easy to compose rhymed couplets, to make up speeches, to invent paintings, to travel through imaginary lands, to look into the past or future And, a moment later, it may be all forgotten

It is the animal, or subconscious trance The interregnum, or reign of hidden influences The nocturnal fishing of the waters The night snare set to catch the fattened birds The oaten harvest ripening in the moonlight The mystic lull during which mysterious voices speak The time in which it is as though we lie with one ear to the ground to catch the whisperings Or are bound to earth and feel its permutations, and become their instrument to hear their messages Things that are illimitable, so that we know them but in fragments and cannot see the pattern Past and future are but part of it Its dimensions of length or breadth, or the measure of its depth

There is the theory of predestination And of mere accident or chance Of the train of circumstance, and of the hand that forces it There are mountains that stand up in thunder, that are wrapped in the lightning The furious symbols are alternate with the plough and crook You can hear the cuckoo calling in the thunderstorm Listen! It has not yet begun to rain The wood is high with meadowsweet and white anemones But dark in the distance And growing darker That was the first drop of rain

Armour hangs up beside the sheepskin The magic toadstool has come up in the night The calyx opens and the blue flag is in flower There are all the months and seasons And the gods of good and evil The fungus and the lily Or the snow white doves come fluttering down Some persons walk in fortune and feed from the golden leaf It is as natural as that But

## *The prospectus*

those times are gone These are dun colours to match the everlasting mud. For it rains and rains Later, bodies will be frozen stiff, their hands and faces being like wax that has been mixed with furniture polish until their flesh is mahogany coloured and quite bloodless The spring will thaw them out, sordid and unrecognizable, face downwards in their rags It may, by then, be profitable to collect their clothing All else is spiritual mud the dross and dregs Who cares? It is not far from the dump of old tins to the sempiternal battlefield The green, slimy gases, which burn and bluster, may yet hang above the earth closets and the garbage heaps Heavy machine oil has dripped into the puddles where the tractors have been standing The scales of Behemoth have printed their marks upon the clay, and there are wisps of oil rag upon the hedges Listen to the tinned music! It is never far away

It is upon such that future hopes are built Blood and sweat are mixed into that mortar It is all the hope there is, but it will build no ivory tower Will it be firm enough to hold up the tenements? There will be uniform monotony and all things will be numbered The tin church and the cinema will stand side by side Meat is in the refrigerator or cold storage The dead bodies are buried with their dentures Or do they pawn them? That is the question At the dividing of the raiment, when the cupboard is left empty? Behold the puking of the newborn, and of the dying! We must slake their thirst, and wash them with a sponge It is a matter of the opening or closing of the eyelids Of windows thrown open for the morning, or shuttered for ever Above, it is winter or summer, but they do not know it There can be other, and wiser, views of death The inscrutable smile carved upon the stone heads and facing to the four winds of heaven Ah! but those were the lotos-eaters, who had drugged themselves by inward contemplation

Here, and in other places

We wonder how much the soul can be separated from the physical body We are born but once, for certain, but those, in affection, who hope to meet again, may find the soul or the physical body, but not both of them All fantasy for there is no surety, and little hope It could be but the echo, or the soft reminder But, perhaps, this is the magic of these gentle hours, and their mystery For, in their sum, they are eternal, and have come to most men and women Those are worlds of travesty, in which the curious would look behind the mask Lands of shadows, or the country of the blind, for the mask hides the features, and the clothes conceal the heart

But we would see the dead stripped of their grave clothes It is a magical alchemy that gives them back the bloom of youth But come with us, and you shall never know you have set foot among the dead! How is it done? It is our secret These are not eaters of arsenic with falsely tinted cheek That will be later, when we have supped with horrors But you will not tell the living from the dead They are all alive, alive, o!

In the meantime another generation has grown up But the future, you

## *No overture*

will see, is no more than a little overlapping of the past. A page of a book blown over in a dream. While you were sleeping. Upon a summer afternoon? No! at night, while it thundered, and there was pelting hail upon the windowpane. How many, oh! how many would turn on their side and go to sleep again. But that must not be

## 2. Storm at Sea

The howling of the storm is let loose as though to the lifting of a hand

It is as if, coming round the corner of a street down by the harbour, we are hit by its full, mad force, shrieking and raving in from sea. Doors and wooden shutters are wrenched open. The windows are pointed arches, or the bifora, of a pair of lights with a stone pillar in between. And the street, all of stone houses, leads down into the gale.

The long clouts of rain beat like the ends of ropes. Listen to the roar of the wind! It could be the wailing of seabirds flying, in their millions, inland from the storm. Great bodies of them could be passing overhead. That might be the beating of their wings. It blows through the flesh and bones. It is a storm in ten thousand in a lifetime. And a night when much will happen. Not yet sunset but the livid evening.

But the rain has stopped. You can hear nothing but the wind and waves. A pause, as though for living things to hide themselves. Suddenly, lightning flickers like fire set to the entire firmament. There is utter silence. A rushing, tearing sound. Then a wild leaping, and one tremendous boom of thunder. It hits, at the end of that, like a whip that lashes upon metal. The next moment striking full upon that, shuddering and shrinking, while it rolls in triumph and booms above our heads.

Growing darker, ever darker. It could be something animal and gigantic. But it rises into a wild and endless shrieking. A huge engine or machinery is working in the storm. Or a rhythm. For it is blowing in from sea. And no one has run for shelter. A crowd of persons is waiting on the quay. As though their help will be needed. They have hurried out from their houses because, storm or no storm, the hour has come. For all we know it may have been delayed for weeks. But now it is imminent.

The whole air is shaken and beaten in the gale. But there has been a message or some signal has been seen. It grows dark and darker, and still the howling of the storm. Those low clouds could be seabirds flying south out of the white or polar darkness. The lightning plays again upon the leaden waters. Thunder booms and rattles and then hits with all its force, close by, as though some building has been struck. Dry thunder, now, without a drop of rain. So that the emptiness is sinister and lies like tinder for the fire to fall. Imagined lightning flares every way you look, as those eyes of fire within the eyelids upon the middle of the night. The leaden air is incandescent and could be lit with flame.

There are frightful pauses between the lightning and the thunder, and again, no interval at all, but the crack of doom at once after no

### *'A piece of cake'*

warning And the yelling, howling tempest multiplies in detail It has interior rhythms This is a night when there will be knocking at all doors No one will forget this storm. There come sudden furies spates in the whirl of waters the ghost-fire of St Elmo will burn at the masthead A wet and shunning thing, but faintly glowing, and difficult to see, as it might be a seabird, fainting from exhaustion, that clings to the rigging

We are waiting with the crowd for someone to arrive By sea or it could be by air It does not matter Someone is coming in a storm of wind and thunder There has been an escape from a lost cause, and danger all the way Until the last moment

No time for more while the thunder cracks and booms For it rises to a hurricane The tornado shrieks and roars One tremendous boom of thunder shakes above, below, and in the hollow caverns of the earth and sky It runs every way at once, thundering this way and that, and then in one point only where it breaks into the leaden chambers, loud and enormous, in the livid cauldron of the storm, thrashing the metal, and shuddering upon the walls like a spirit dying

But there is a closing of wings Something descends, or comes down into the water, not far away It could be a huge seaplane landing in the harbour A sail has been sighted, and in incredible speed it comes up out of the darkness The persons waiting come running out from the shelter of the harbour wall It is known immediately and recognized There is a moment of danger while the sails are lowered We hear the sound of that, and of the sailors shouting And then the gliding, past the pier, into the calmer waters

Othello's vessel has come safely into port

Where do we find ourselves? It could be upon the quays of Famagosta There are—there must be—sand dunes and a golden stone But this is no hour to watch the painted sails and painted prows This flight, or arrival, is in the imagination For we speak in symbols

There is a fanfare of trumpets as Othello steps ashore His friends welcome him, and he enters the castle with Cassio and Montano

## 3. Refugee Ship

We hear the barking of the dog Cerberus, or the echo of it in the orchestra

It could be many other things Distant gunfire 'after one of the heaviest bombs had been dropped, a whole built-up area appeared to boil' We hear the cries of terror of the multitude, like a raging beast trapped in the fire It is chained up, and has no escape Humanity is being roasted on the spit, and the dog Cerberus guards the burning bodies We hear the buildings crunch down, while whole factory walls 'come up at you', hundreds of feet into the air, as though they took to flight No! No! that is the inferno of the living We have to pass through this It is no use to look the other way There are bodies underneath the houses It will



PART OF THE NORTHERN FACE OF ONE OF THE SHIANT ISLES  
by W. Danell



## *Flares were dropped*

grow worse and worse The big fires are coming A black pall of smoke hangs over the town, and the dog Cerberus barks from out of it Yes It barks Those are guns barking Those are not drums They would not beat at such intervals It is the dog Cerberus who guards the Stygian shore. Throw him a bone to gnaw, and he will pick it up, and let you by.

But the winds have not died down. How long, O, how long will it be before they settle! There are a hundred fires left burning and they light the sky. You could see to read a newspaper And what will the headlines be! What city, or country, has fallen? Or can it be the end of all things, the final night edition! No There is ever another dawn That is the bitterness of it There must be daylight by which to see the comedy, and the paint upon the dead men's faces By to-morrow there will be more sights to see. The brains are seething in a head which is on fire There is a skull which you could poke with a stick and which would fall to ashes Limbs drop easily out of their sockets A foot juts up at you like a foot out of the bottom of a bed There is someone talking, and groaning, in that dark corner And a body is carried out that is like a plaster cast, like the 'living statues' of the old music hall, it is so thick with dust

The angels have plaster wings and lie upon the chancel steps Some tombs are blown open and the bones have rolled about for dogs to play with A winding sheet could be the table cloth spread upon the grass for a picnic But the printed slogans of the vicar are not even torn down from the announcement board The dead enter into the next world with a burial service They are put into one common grave, as though it were the hundred men shot down by the firing squad All the clergy of the town take part Of all denominations There are long lines of weeping men and women, and children led by the hand

It is here the myth begins, among the black clad mourners It is here we wander, lyre in hand

The dog Cerberus barks in every suburb Or is it thunder? Listen! listen! that was, surely, lightning Or is it no more than an electric train? The last train home down to Hammersmith, or Putney Down to Blackheath down to the Isle of Dogs They flash in that manner on a frosty night No! no! something is coming It was a train, after all There was a tremor in the earth It must be the underground But look! There can be no doubt about it They have come back They are dropping flares The whole sky is as light as day But it is not London. The suburbs have no names Nor has it London's heart Piccadilly, with its name like a costers' dance, all pearly buttons Not Lambeth, round great Bedlam Not gas-lit Pimlico Not Soho, of the foreign tongues and newspapers Not Bond Street, nor the Strand.

For we have gone past the postern Cerberus barks behind us Those were dead men whom we passed They were dead bodies Did you see their hands? Why are we here? It is because the lost years can be found again. Also, because we look for someone And for the arts of a lost world. Someone is dead Something has gone and cannot be recovered It has been necessary to descend into hell in order to bring it back We took the



## *At the frontier*

occasion of so much misery to join the mourners and follow the dead bodies. For there have never been such spectres of hopelessness and doom. They have lost their homes and are in lodgings and in hostels. In prisons and in concentration camps. When new houses are built they will have nothing to put in them. They have lost their hearts and found they have no souls. What has gone is more important than the mere body. There can be corpses, in plenty, and nothing to save. Neither more, not less, than from the living person. Their deaths have made no difference. To themselves, least of all. They were unwanted children, conceived because there was no better amusement on the drunken Sabbath. Worse still, on a sober Sunday with its lifeless streets. For drink is too expensive. There is never a bacchanalia in the suburbs, at the terminus of the train. Or at the detached villa, with its own front door and garage. At the Tudor (two-door residences) and baronial halls. Where is the painter of the arterial roads and avenues? They are roads of triumph leading to the town hall. Past mansions of the dead, all in ruins. Past the police station and decontamination centre. Past the cottage hospital.

Cerberus is chained at every door, like the dog outside the department store, except that his owner will never come back again to fetch him. At any moment we may hear his bark, for it is a moonlit night. It is full moon, but the moon has gone behind a cloud. There is a 'black-out' here upon the shores of hell, purely as a measure of precaution. Leaflets have been printed, and will be distributed through the post, or from your nearest labour exchange. And the paper upon which the leaflets are printed must not be destroyed or thrown away.

Only upon this one shore. The other bank is neutral territory. But we have only this means of communication between here and there. By the small ferry boat. Not at stated times, but irregularly. There is no priority. All must wait their turn. So it is said, but this is not true. Some of the living have been known to reach the other side. We will give instances of this immortality. Others are detained under no warrant. They have become wanderers along the shore. The vast mass of humanity takes nothing with them, and leaves nothing behind. We hear no more of them than their laughter, or their cries of terror. Some persons have become immortal by their sufferings.

We began with a storm. We have been born in stormy times. And, indeed, the winds blow us to the banks of Styx. It can never be calm again in our lifetimes. Those, who die, have the roaring of it in their ears. It can be continual as that held note which musicians have heard, and which has made them lose their reason. A howling or moaning, or a high pitched interrogation. A perpetual question, a riddle or a mystery. The stupid and uneducated have heard it, too. The saints and witches had their 'voices'. So had common lunatics. Fantasies of the subconscious, but this is not enough in explanation. Their disease has given them this flowering season. These are monstrous fruits, Dead Sea apples, flowers which are striped and freaked with colours. We shall touch all these, and taste them, even if we spit the poison out.

## *No Quota*

But we arrive in the full shrieking of the gale We would sooner be wrecked than have to wander on that shore The floating hulk, to starboard, is a refugee ship bound from a Black Sea port for Palestine Of such are the phantoms of our own time It is raising anchor The seagulls ride near to it upon the swell It could be a ship from the guano islands It has become like a rookery, where you tell the nest by the white droppings at the tree foot There are stainings of white lime upon the ivy, and looking up, the rooks are cawing in the leafless boughs This, too, this ship is like a town or settlement They have turned it into their village Not worn or rubbed away, but clotted or coagulated by months and months of misery Who would dare go down into the ship's galley? Into the sleeping quarters, where there are salted herrings, eaten and thrown down upon the tables, on the floors? The ship's bread is too nauseating to be touched It was kneaded in that cloacal tunnel, upon a table that is like a clotted altar stone

No one wants these fugitives They have been driven from every port in turn Many children are on board, of a strange pallor, with a tinge or blue like the paste of fine porcelain showing underneath their skins, the same colour as the blue of the eyeball, and as though washed upon their wrists and faces All are dressed in black Children, who, anywhere else but on this ship, would be playing games, are held in their mothers' arms, or sit, huddled, in their laps Like the young leaves they are withered on the stern Men and women wear shabby shoes, and shuffle, without lifting their feet, but only to that side of the ship which faces to the shore None of them look out to sea And, in fact, the further coast is invisible Hidden in a Channel fog They hear the church clocks and the clanging of the trams Sometimes, an engine whistle Or the shouting of the evening papers Nothing from the further shore Not the mournful tolling of the bell buoy, stroke after stroke, as it lifts upon the waves No message Nothing There is no sign But the anchor is hauled up The winches groan and pant A huge wave comes up and hits the ship, like a blow before there is time to put the arm up to the face The entire ship shudders And all on board cower as it heads out to sea, into the storm

## 4. The Cliffs of Slieve League

The Cliffs of Slieve League rise, two thousand feet sheer out of the dark blue sea

Or is it a mural precipice, falling in one escarpment into the Atlantic Ocean There are days when the wind is so strong that no one can walk alone upon the summit He must hold on to others. Or must crawl, or scramble It is the place of farewell It is the place of weeping Here, or near here, there was the embarkation It was a lost cause, and, in our allegory, we would have this for the last sight of land An island, perhaps, or a rocky headland, but, nevertheless, the treading of the native soil

## *The Kraken*

The great cliffs are dreadful and tremendous in a storm. No landscape in the Old World is more sublime than this. But it is clear weather. The colours of the cliffs are as stains of metals: white, amber, yellow, golden, mostly, but bright reds and greens and purples, too, all in the clear bloom, or carnation, of this ocean morning. There could be no other word for it. For the fresh, soft morning is like the complexion, or like the bright iris of the eye, up into infinity, where it is light itself, answering or echoing the huge Atlantic.

The mainland floats in magic. From far out to sea, or in the corrach at foot of the cliffs where they march out of the sucking tides. For the huge Atlantic rises up and swells at them. There is never day, nor night, without that noise of tides. The corrach of tarred canvas lifts up and down, as black and round as though it were the hide of a porpoise, or of some sea animal blown up to float upon the surges. There are no waves in this clear morning. Only far out to sea. But the waters suck with their serpent lips, and run up the cliffs beyond the tide mark, and sink down, shuddering, and gather up once more. You can row so close that you could be raised up and dashed against the cliff. For the mountain rises straight out of the sea. Even upon a calm day it is sinister and horrible to watch the ocean swelling at that precipice foot, and by its nature swollen, again, again, and never quiet.

The sublime cliffs look down into the monster. This is at the world's end. Those are the white sands of Faa. Here, below, should glide the Kraken. Once in a hundred years it hisses through the waters. 'It gave the impression of a creature crooking up its back to sun itself. It was a huge sea monster. It was brown in colour, shining, and with a sort of ruffle at the junction of the head and neck. It moved its head from side to side and I saw the reflection of light from its wet skin. I saw no body, only a ripple of water where the line of the body should be.' Bishop Eric Pontoppidan,<sup>1</sup> the Norwegian, may have heard report of these high cliffs. It is bright and clear, here, at the end of all the world, but of another mythology. And of different roots. They are not Norse, or northern. This is the Thebaid of rocks and islands. The saints loved the mists and the roar of the great ocean. This is the west of the whole world. Here they talk in their own language. It is the speech of the islands.

We will float in our coracle along the limpid morning. Gulls and guillemots in their thousands rest upon the water. Hundreds together, with their white breasts showing, black, too, like notes or stops of counterpoint, for their number is incredible, and they are as integral to these great cliffs as cornstooks to the golden plain. They lie still in their myriads, white and grey and black, stippling the void. For it is as though oils of many colours, or as many metals ground to powder, had been poured into the sea. It has become igneous or inflammable, and yet is no more than the shadow of the precipice, not even an oily scum, but some-

<sup>1</sup> Erik Pontoppidan, Bishop of Bergen, published his *Natural History of Norway* in 1754. In this he describes and illustrates the sea serpent.



THE SHIANT ISLES  
by W. Daniell



## *Mewing of the gulls*

thing illusory, a mere reflection of the ramparts in the water, but which, curiously, has stilled it for an hour or a whole day. Indeed this stillness, and the static pointing or stopping of the gulls in their countless thousands, makes the character or proportion of the scene. As measure and balance to the great walls of rock, and to this ghostly calm, which is without movement, save where the surges swell up and sink back again at foot of the mountain. They are fiery cliffs and fiery waters not yet lit to flame, but lambent or apocalyptic, in which the human element is not seen at all, being unworthy of this wonder of the ocean and the rocks.

But it is not all. A myriad seagulls hang like a cloud, in level lines, along the air and across the cliff face, giving the height of those huge bastions and seeming not to move, so long as we look at them, until the whole shape changes, as in the clouds of sunset or sunrise, when their formation has altered and they have drifted like a mist higher up or lower down, while other myriads wheel above the cliffs, two thousand feet, and more, in air, and their crying comes down to us and we are aware, suddenly, of a million seabirds on the rocky ledges, nearly out of sight, and of the floating nations upon the waters, all calling out and wailing. Nothing else moves, or makes a sound. A whole flock of them, far away, takes wing and crosses into the shadow, but their snowy wings and grey breasts make up that pattern or counterpoint upon the enormous and terrifying wall of rock. It is a landscape formed by the vertical lines of the steep cliffs, and by a myriad lines of little dots or points which are the seabirds. A Hebridean landscape, but not entirely, for the light is more unreal, coming, as it does, not from the wilderness of ocean only but from the huge interior of the island. This is not one solitary isle among an archipelago. It is where a whole country with legends of its own starts out of the bed of ocean, at the end of all things.

We will row near enough to the cliff face to smell the weeds. The sea mosses, greener than grass, and browner fronds that lift and sink back upon the surges. For there is no shore. The northern or great rorqual, a hundred feet and more in length, the largest living monster that is known, leviathan of the northern seas, could bask and rub its belly against the giant cliff. Then the gulls, like a nation or a continent, would rise upon their wings. In this shadow, it is as though we floated in a cavern, while, out beyond, in the world of light, there lies the immensity with nothing but the mewing of the gulls and the flocks of them lifting and falling with the tide.

What sort of a land can this be? Is it no more than the weeded stepping stone at a ford across the stream? Does it lead on to other lands? Or is it the beginning and the end? Where the heart must be buried? But it is, in fact, a land of exile. Its sons, that is to say, are driven from it. A land of sad memories, of which the crying of the million seabirds under this cliff is harbinger. Come down its long miles of empty plain, where the bog devours, like lava without fire, to a hundred or a thousand lakes of winding waters, to other cliffs not like these precipices, of lesser height, to mountains, wild and remote, a day's journey between the rocky

## *Atlantic cliffs*

boulders, mountains in mere name for they are no more than hills, but are so lonely in their soft colours and green lights of sea, to the saints' oratories and their cold beds of stone, right in the mists, where the only architecture is a round tower or cone, where the dead splendours of the land and its departed glories, now, or in ancient time, were the rhyme of numbers and the sweeping of the harp, where indiscipline of temperament made all men enemies and friends, inviting the invader who destroyed them, where each generation lived in poverty, and thought itself descended from a golden age, this is the land, of all lands, that has been loved in exile, this is the land from which lost causes sail, victims of lost fortune, persons who leave to make their living by their swords

Its ancient greatness was an affair of words. Nothing is left of it, but old manuscripts and fallen stones that could scarce form a building. A bronze bell, no bigger than a cowbell, but it could be heard all over the arbutus isle. For we speak of lakes and sacred islands. A thorn tree strung with rags, blest waters that are no more than a fountain that springs up beneath a stone. The white damson and the cobnut tree. The autumn of the elderberry, while its clusters are black as grapes upon the hedges. When the Atlantic spray will fling upon the rocks. When it will soon be winter in the snakeless fields.

For a further symbol we would have the Cliffs of Moher, not so high, but running for five miles in a sheer wall or precipice. They are cliffs of black shale, and, looking down, it could be the shore of the dark underworld. For the black flags or flakes of shale have fallen, fallen with a noise of thunder. We do not hear that in the Cliffs of Moher. It is not in the syllables of that name. But they tumble in great segments that leave a knife edge above. In the middle of the night you could hear the black cliffs falling. Down and down, to the wild waters. Or, in daytime, an appalling booming, and then nothing more. It is the cliffs of Moher falling to the sea. In our allegory they are black cliffs. And, in the sound of their name, sheer and tremendous upon the edge of nothing. Or the Cliffs of Croaghnaun which are weird and fearful where they drop into the sea. Shevemore mountain, of mica and dark quartz, where it towers up out of the great Atlantic, up the dark rifts of it, to where its summit is hidden in the bright clouds of sunset. Or the Cliffs of Minaun, which the winds have worked and vaned, where at low tide, there is a hard and dazzling white strand.

The embarkation was not many miles away. Over the marshes and the waste of rocks, by blue lakes that have nothing but the clouds and the brown shores to mirror. Blue waters where the deer come down to drink, where are no trees but holly, yew, or juniper, loughs or tarns of the black raven. By sea, doubling the Bloody Cape or Foreland, past lands of peat and granite boulders, past countless islands that are uninhabited, round another headland to the giant cliffs.

The wrecks of the Spanish galleons were recent on this coast. Twelve hundred bodies washed ashore at Spanish Point in Mal Bay, three galleons sunk on the sands at the mouth of the Shannon, and another at



COVE IN MALBAY  
by W H Bartlett





## *Driven upon the rocks*

Kilrush, *La Rata*, the greatest ship of the whole Armada, with Don Alonso de Leyva on board, gone down in Blacksod Bay, three more galleons driven on the dunes of Donegal Bay, and to the north, a great galleon, the *Gerona*, near the Giant's Causeway, shivered to bits with all but five on board. Thence, indeed, the wrecked galleons continue into the Hebrides, at intervals along the Gaelic coast. The *Florida* went down in Tobermory Bay, upon the shores of Mull, and *El Gran Grifon* upon Fair Isle, between Orkney and Shetland. Many others, but their names are not known.

Nothing could give a truer picture of the mournful waste behind these giant cliffs than the narrative of one or two survivors of the great galleons.<sup>1</sup> The victims of such fearful adventures came ashore, dazed and hungry, and made their way painfully up the rocks, on to the wild and windy moors. That day, perhaps, they met no human being. More than all else they will have wished to be out of the sound of the waves. A person in their dilemma would strike at once inland. But, in this sense, with the Atlantic on both sides, there is little else but coast. The roar of the ocean comes up behind the wind. In the morning there is smoke rising from a hut of turf, and the smell of peat which is unfamiliar to them. And, crawling out of their den, the barbarians, women and children for the most part, stare at the Spaniards. It is incredible that these ragged savages, nearly as starving as themselves, and gabbling in their unknown tongue, should be Catholic, and have priests and monks and nuns. Yet they look upon the Spaniards as enemies. Or foreigners driven upon their shores. The Spaniards do not know what part of the island they have landed in, and, were they told, it would mean nothing to them. They are given water and oatmeal, being struck, even in their own misery, by how poor the Irish are.

Towards nightfall they are brought to the castle or stronghold of a chief, where the wild character of this country and its inhabitants are even terrifying to persons who set sail from the luxuries of Antwerp and Seville. The Irish nobles, the chieftains of the septs, dwelt in a feudal poverty but little mitigated by their long descent and by the multitude of their ragged retainers. The harp was playing when the Spaniards arrived. But they do not tell us what we would wish to know. How the chieftains were dressed, whether the Gaelic nobles were red haired or dark, whether they belonged, in everything, to a world of twilight, or had been touched, in detail, by the Renaissance. Many had been educated in England or been in English prisons. Some had travelled to Italy or France. All spoke English, not all could speak their native Erse. Yet there could be no mistaking them for Tudor Englishmen. They were different in accent. In appearance and character, and in their mode of life. In their improvidence and frugality, being as quick to ruin themselves as to pick quarrels over nothing. Their castle is not described to us. Perhaps it was no more barely furnished than many Spanish castles.

But this brings us to the embarkation. We do not need to scrutinize

<sup>1</sup> Some narratives of survivors of the Spanish Armada have been published.

## *The embarkation*

every person who goes on board the ship, or take the inventory of its contents. But, in symbol or allegory, we sail from here. The losing cause has been driven into this far corner. There is nothing left but to escape. For historical fact, or inspiration, what we are witnessing is the Flight of the Earls, from Rathmullen, in 1607. It had been preceded by the rising of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, with the encouragement of the 'Sugan' (straw rope) Earl of Desmond, in 1594. Many years of intrigue and fighting followed upon this, but the romantic flight of the Earls, more than any one other event, destroyed Gaelic Ireland. They set sail from Rathmullen with a hundred chieftains of the Gaelic north (the number on board was actually ninety nine) and after a fearful voyage of three weeks landed at the mouth of the Seine. The rest of their lives was spent in exile. Their huge estates were confiscated in the Plantation of Ulster under James I, and the two Earls died in Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Much more than this is foreshadowed in the tragedy before our eyes. The great period of exile was at hand. The tatterdemalion horrors of the Irish encampment at Vinegar Hill during the '98 Rebellion, and the starving spectres of the Famine are present at this embarkation, like evil memories of what is to come. For our purpose it is a symbol, and we attach to it many implications which belong to other things. There is no need to be precise. It is enough that, at some time, a ship set sail with persons on board who were escaping. That they had to round these capes and headlands and, only in theory, passed by Slieve League, or by the black Cliffs of Moher. And the allegory will begin to grow. Having stated the historical occasion we are no more concerned with facts. The embarkation becomes of poetical, of hallucinatory importance, so that effects and personages can be imputed to it until all factual reality is lost. That chosen stretch of coast becomes the background of the Flight. For other lost causes, and other persons to whom it is appropriate that their voyage should begin and end in storm. They are, for ever, sailing under the huge cliffs. If the horizon is empty, they have but come and gone. And will pass by again.

But we must see the departure of the exiles. It is late in September, near to the equinox. Already, a fearful wind is blowing. The ship lifts up and rolls against the sea wall. Towards evening it grows calmer, but with black and heavy clouds. Once they set foot on board ship the exiles lose their identity, and become just fugitives and nothing more. The mountains fade out upon the night. A harp is playing, it is a blind harpist, or itinerant musician. All is ready. At last, by torchlight, the chieftains come on board, with the two Earls, at the end of all, muffled up in their black cloaks so that we cannot see their features. The sails are hoisted. They raise anchor, and the ship glides down Lough Swilly towards the open sea.

The two or three persons who are left behind walk slowly off. And the blind harpist, led by his barefoot daughter, carries away his harp into the night.

<sup>1</sup> Their tombs are in the Franciscan church of S. Pietro in Montorio.

## 5. Ben Arcuil

Theories of the godhead have been revealed in dreams. Such visions must be personal to their recipient, but they are as sensible as waking thoughts, and have a subterranean or subconscious wisdom. The countenance of God must be a mystery among birds and animals. Why should it be in human shape? Divine wisdom could be born of the eggshell.

I had a dream of a huge serpent head. This was manifest after much initiation, and many mysteries which were preliminary. I remember the sensation, which was that of being brought face to face with the Pala d'Oro of St Mark's. That golden altar front, made in Byzantium, goes back to the Pharaohs and to the beginnings of religion. Its glitter is indescribable under the torchlight. It is like a golden breastplate, but it is a golden tabernacle, a golden altar, of the line of Thebes or Babylon. More magnificent as a work of art than any in the ancient temples. Probably the greatest work, in precious metals, of the whole world. In the gloom round it, in the dark space in which it lies, it is like something magnificent and glittering under the water, below the green wave of the marble, below the porphyry, and mosaic, and, at the extinguishing of the torch, it sinks back again into the tides of time.

But this was alive, and not inanimate and dead. It was round, and like the face of the sun. A countenance with no body, or the body was not materialized, but, in humility of person, this was given or granted as a sign in order to convince the atheist. Not that, wholly, for who could be who looks for a proof, but I am agnostic, and vain enough to deny all religions and think they are the vapour of men's minds. What else could this be? But it was magnificent and ineffable, not in goodness. A serpent countenance, and of metal. Of brass fish scales, like those Indian fish of brass that bend their bodies, hammered by the coppersmith and sold in the bazaars, but which have something of the sacredness and mystery of the serpent. Such was its integument, its scaly covering. Into its eyes it was impossible to look, for they were closed. Not in sleep, but in such sort that the closed eyelids seemed to smile, not with pleasure, but in an ecstasy of contemplation. It had no mouth, or no lips at least, but a flickering serpent tongue, darting incessantly, not in search of food or water, but more like the sacred cow's tail when she stands in the water on a hot summer morning. A fly whisk, a wand, or the fan of feathers of the tropic King. For this forked tongue was not the flickering lighting, it moved lazily, in satisfaction. It interpreted the trance and the close lidded eyes. If the eyes created wisdom, this enjoyed it. Not licking its lips, but moving like the wings of insects in the summer wood. In play before the countenance of wisdom.

But the serpent countenance was neither good nor evil, not a god, nor any idol, but the ineffable mystery. For it is the weakness of every concept of religion that it must partake of good or bad. Those are ethical

## *Serpent countenance*

values, but not concerned in the creation. For that must be animal. All life, there is a theory, can have come by accident. But the same theory argues there is no life upon any other of the planets, and that we are alone. That is magnificent, by negation, but who is there to prove it, or believe in it? The serpent countenance formed the mountains, tinted the eggshell, and is the sacred crocodile who stirs the waters. The smile of creation, and the face of the monster at the gates of death. Who eats or devours the dead bodies. What happens after death is nothing. Not the concern of the serpent. Does the soul escape and fly, bat-like, in the dusk? Since there is the one miracle of life, there could be another miracle of death.

I believe that I saw the countenance, or one of the many countenances, of creation. It is more difficult than to see the face of death, for that is familiar, and yet the first thing that a child must not be told. Many persons have had dreams in which dogs, or birds, or beasts of the field, have been given tongues, and have spoken. Could this serpent speak? It seemed to be mute, like a holy person who is vowed to silence. In its wisdom it had no need of words. Does the thunder speak? What are the words of the Northern winds? This was animal, and not like to ourselves, which is to say, we are not made in its image, for it is impossible to believe that it has bodily shape. We beheld it in a phase, or at a transitory moment, in metamorphosis, as though it had been a nymph, and then a chrysalis, that shed its sheath, and renewed itself. That may have been its secret. The sublime terror of the serpent countenance lay in its agelessness. I knew in my vision that it was a male, but, like a serpent, it was careless of its progeny.

The primitive mind, which is nearest to creation, put its faith in idols, rude shapes of wood or stone, but they are more subtle than the finished features. This was not Dagon, nor any god of the leaded fishing net, not a god at all, but the countenance of creation. It had to be animal, like every living thing, it had animal wisdom, instinct.

How did it create? Where is the landscape of the serpent? Did it rub its belly, coming up the estuary to spawn, by mere touch or propinquity making fertile, and glide down into the ocean? So it is, under Arcuil, the mountain that is blue like amethyst when it has rained, while the salmon come up the loch to spawn. Of that landscape, here and now, for it belongs to a million years ago.

The loch is shaded by the birch trees, and they scent the air. To one side, they climb another mountain, among the leaping torrents and the waterfalls, up to the cliff face where the rock overhangs and in its cavern shelter on the steep green bank, a hind and her fawns are feeding. Slowly, slowly, those go along the mountain side. You can only tell them because they move from place to place.

Suppose we ride up into the mountain, by another path, coming out among the rowan trees, but the berries are not red yet! Somehow the thin leaves interpret the clear light of the Atlantic. But, soon, there are no

## *Bog cotton*

trees at all, and the saxifrage grows upon the rocks, where the peat drips and oozes its stained waters. The golden plover calls, mournfully, from near by. There is a pillar or rude cairn of stones. The whole blue loch is so little that it could be held up in the hands. And, now, the landscape changes. Arcuil goes into the mists, but, of that, later. For another world opens, down to Kyle Strome, and the salt fjord, with lochs at many levels, and the unreal mountains tossing upon the air.

There is a turn of the path, and a round tarn, near by, which is full of trout, and another track that winds, mysteriously, into the distance. We are at the highest point and begin descending. That other landscape is hidden at the back of us. Now comes the miracle of this wild land of rock and water for the cloud lifts and a huge mountain, opposite, across the fjord, drops, down, down, and over the ridge of it we see the Hebrides, sixty miles and more away, floating out in the Atlantic. That point must be the Butt of Lewis, the prow of the Lews, as they ride out into the Northern ocean.

Down below, as we come down and down, in one direction there is a scumblng of rocks or flats, a distance and uncertainty that give proportion to the scene, and are like strokes of genius with the sepia brush, stepping stones from this land out into the magic of the blue main, where it washes against the Hebridean rocks, and lies unbroken, for ever, into the distance. But it is a long way, an hour's ride down to the shore, and all the while the details alter. Other hills come up, from below, and little tarns that are blue, for a moment, and then gone behind the rocks. The mewing of the seagulls can be heard, and we smell the seaweed. The tide is out. We are upon the shore, and the seabirds call in chorus.

Or the track, upon another day, leads to the mussel beds. You can lift the brown weeds and find them clinging to the rocks. Past the mouth of the salmon river with the Norwegian name, where the netted salmon lying upon the bank were heavy as little children, past pools of water lilies, and rocky islets where the diver nests, and from high altitude strikes down into the waters. Past peat cuttings where the bog cotton grows, a flower that is a lock or wisp of cotton upon which the red deer feed, but which, in imagery, must be the asphodel of the far islands and the near shore. The beach has many coloured pebbles, which are wet and shining after rain. It is sad and melancholy upon the shore, but how old it is! Here the beachcombers could wander, lifting the weeds and rolling back the rocks to look for shellfish. No fantastic mountains. We are shut in by hills, and only have the estuary in front. Listen! that is the curlew calling from across the waters. This is a shore where they scraped the rocks for lichen with an iron hoop in order to make dyes from them. An estuary where the tinkers come to look for pearls in the shells of the river oysters.

Cape Wrath is but a few miles away, with a shepherd's cabin and no other dwelling in between. Not named for the storms, but after the Norse word *Hvarth*, which means the turning point. Here the world ends.

## *The evening waters*

The land is different in its very bones The cliffs of Sheve League are of another imagery, although they face the same Atlantic This is the North, and not the West It is the landscape of Norway, or even Greenland But in this little area only, for a few miles along the coast And nowhere else Not in any other part of the world This corner of land is our illusion or mirage of an imagined North, lying against the Hebrides To the Norseman it was the dew-dropping South leading down into the islands There had been an earlier race, and who were they? Who set up the standing stones of Callernish in that lonely place, on the far side of Lewis, with but the shelter of an island, and then the end of all things?

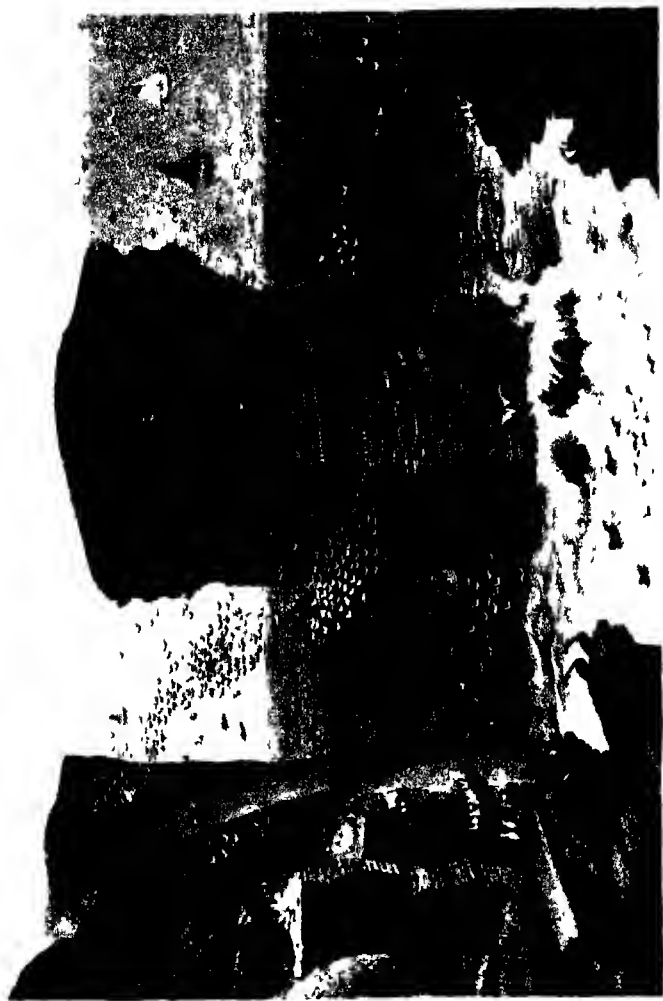
This mainland, when it comes out of the rains, has the bright colours of its igneous origin They are fire mountains, older than any other mountain, and still bearing the stains of the crucible, but tumbled here and there in chaos among the other hills The rocks are Cambrian quartzite, grey-pink Archaean or Lewisian granite, Torridon sandstone, and the blue-black gabbro Here is the landscape of the creation Here, in the North For it must be Northern We see the machair or meadowland, in flower with cotton grass, sloping its fields of asphodel down to the mussel beds of the lonely estuary

Above, upon the mountains, it is the landscape of Delphi, but with no history and no monuments Below, in the declining year, you can row out upon the lake, when the rowan berries have gone red, and hear the belling of the stags across the water It is like an angry roaring, and sometimes, in the stillness, stag answers stag from the slope of the great hill to the mountain opposite It has happened that the stalkers find a pair of stags locked together by their antlers, dead, upon the hillside, both fallen in their tournament We could have heard the clashing of their antlers

A great salmon leaps out in the loch, jumping vertically, and falling back again, while the sea trout turn and flash their colours as they leap The salmon, indeed, curves like the dolphin You see the arc of his body, his dorsal fin and fluked tail, all arching over in a bow It is his heavy, solid shape, more than the disturbing of the waters But the sea trout plunges like a dagger thrown, twisting in the air, and falling, not by weight, but by his trajectory spent

It is the late evening, twilight, and the black-throated divers make their gabbling at the far end of the loch, where it is too dark to see them A black cormorant flies past, and suddenly, from great height, a diver drops with closed wings into the waters, and after a long moment comes up again, far off, and fades into the darkness The smell of a peat fire means the house among the holly trees, and a dog barks, and we hear the oars strike for the last time and the creaking of the rowlocks, and the boat pulled ashore upon the pebbles Later, the closing of the wicket, and, in thought, the footsteps among the currant bushes

Under Arcuil, the hill of amethyst, for this house is in its shadow It is the only house at the foot of Arcuil How beautiful to come out and look up at the mountain in the moonlight! In the light of the hunter's moon



THE CLETT ROCK  
by W. Danell





## Blue mountain

Part of the loch would be lit by it, but there are the deep shadows of the other mountain. Look up, and there is a white cloud upon the shining head of Arcuil, and the dark of its frightening gullies, which are wind funnels, down which the winds can roar! The glacis of the mountain, with its slopes of rubble before the rock outcrops and rises, are of another colour from the mountain. There are little hills or pyramids that lead up to it, and in this calm moonlight they are pitched like tents. It is, in fact, terrifying to look upon the age-old monster, for in its rocky matrix it is a survivor from another world. But it never moves, and never makes a sound. We do not even hear the winds blow. It is quiet to-night, but like a volcano that is sleeping. It is upon Arcuil that deer are found, occasionally, that have forked tails. An old legend, but it has been proved true. Like a tail grown double, with a stump that divides or forks, no more than that, but they are peculiar to this mountain.

In the morning, we are to ride up Arcuil. Round the end of the loch, and the shoulder of the little hill above the holly grove,<sup>1</sup> and so into the plain at foot of the mountain. That has no features at all, but is swept bare, and could be expressed by a single line in drawing, or by a sweep of the brush loaded with that unreal green. In front, there is a split or fissure in the rock, and a waterfall that leaps from the ravine. Far away, at foot of that, the only living things in the whole landscape are the herd of mountain ponies, brought from Norway. The scene has no need of human beings. As we come nearer, before they move away, their arched necks could be those of a race of stallions in the plain of Troy. Their coats are a creamy or pink dun, their manes are black, with a bar of white in it, and their tails are black with the same white bar. But they are gone before we reach the waterfall, and climb up at its side, where there are a myriad gnats among the growing pine trees.

The path zigzags steeply, and in a few moments we are higher than the glacis and level with the bare bones of the monster. Then comes an Alpine meadow of brown turf, with a sheer edge dropping, down, down, to the plain and to the blue waters. You can walk near to the edge, and have your breath taken by the height and by the clear world below. At this point we leave the track and climb the boggy flank of the mountain, with its rocky wall or rampart running straight ahead of us, foreshortened, and lifting itself to tremendous height and strength out of the plain. It is as though we are carried up on the back of the monster, in its power, and having no other resolution than to climb higher upon its beautiful, but fearful rock. It does not, in itself, give the effect of height, for it slopes upward, slowly and steadily, and its magnificence is more of strength or weight, and of appalling antiquity. Terrifying, in the thought of how the winds must roar. Blue and shining, like the flanks of leviathan when he comes up out of the deep to blow. But frightening, because it is so enormous and so old.

At that moment it was shouted that we must look out for a golden

<sup>1</sup> But of a holly that has a particular dull glitter to its leaves, probably the dahoon, *aquifolium scotica*, or smooth-leaved berrying holly.

## *Golden eagles*

eagle there, under the very rock itself, flying along the face of it, in the teeth of the wind, and now against the sky. The eagle and its mate, for there were two of them, were trying their wings, in play before the countenance of the mountain, dipping their wings, and, typically, like the eagles of Delphi or High Atlas, sailing without a tremor, turning and soaring as though from one element into another out of the empty air along the bastions of amethyst, in and out of a cloud or mist, and over that appalling precipice, past and around their eyrie, which, we knew, was always facing to the North, as if they could not taste enough the wind and cold. So they circled, and looked down, and after a time must have gone back to their nest. But Arcuil was too steep, the ponies could climb no further, and retracing our steps down its boggy sides, we found the path again, and went on.

The way led to another mountain. For a long while under the mass of Arcuil, so that we could not see it as a whole, until the path led in a new direction, having climbed high enough, and we came to a round mountain loch with a stag feeding upon its bank, that made off into the rocks. How clear the August morning, between the showers of rain! But not a tree, nor a flower, grew there. All the architecture was an accumulation of the stones. The dead flowers of the saxifrage, withered brown, were like pods or husks. The mosses had flowered in this corrie or circus of the mountains, for it was shaped in natural amphitheatres, semicircular hollows or recesses that shelved back, and built the chaos. We began to climb still higher, where great stones, rolled by some mighty glacier, had paused for no reason, and were tilted on the slope, slow creeping projectiles of the Ice Age, but ready to come down at a touch. A chaos formed by ice and fire, for the igneous rocks were all around.

Now, suddenly, the world lifted and we saw the back of Arcuil, an enormous block falling in another colour, as though in the powdering or debris of its amethyst, but hard as crystal, in a frightful drop or precipice into nothing. A huge and isolated mountain. Huge in bulk, a great wold of stone, heaving to its edge. The hairline escarpment, and the utter drop or fall, with the glaciis or mountain foot many hundred feet below, and close up against it, in a sort of valley formed between Arcuil and the mountain next to it, a descending vale with the blue sea at bottom of it, and out in that, the Orkneys, fantastic in the distance as the rocks of Leonardo. The fabled Orcades of the Ancients, floating, this moment, in a halcyon ocean. Uninhabited, we would have them, but by the dark haired Orcadians who set up the megaliths upon Pomona, the mainland, and dragged the standing stones of Stenness, cyclopean builders, and brothers to the race who set up the Stones of Callernish. From the summit of Arcuil, upon a clear day, you would see the Orkneys and the Hebrides, also. So magical in outline that the eyes could hardly grasp them, as now the Orkneys, but only for a few moments, for, as we climbed, another mountain soon hid its bulk in front of that vision of the islands.

Instead, we were upon the top of a mountain, which had outcrops of a white rock like limestone, as thickly scattered as slabs of stone upon the

## *Mountain sickness*

fields of Galway, a landscape with no distant views, and descending, after a time, to where a mountain torrent had to be forded, where the ponies could find no foothold on the worn and slippery rocks. Coming, down, down, by steep turns, into another stony amphitheatre, with another and awful mountain upon the right hand side, that stood up and assumed its shape of terror as we came down below it. Now revealing a tarn or flat basin, held up by a huge wall of rock, but shut in, close to the bosom of the mountain, and in its shadow.

Over that rocky shelf the water dripped in a high waterfall, dropping to a tarn below. And we came, down, down, deeper into the chill shadow of the mountain, by the roaring torrent. Its dark rock was appalling. The one tarn hanging above the other, as if its black waters could pour down in horror into the valley. It was like some legend of death and poison out of the sagas. They were two poison cups of the giants, and the mingling of their waters would bring disaster. It was inconceivable that any human habitation could be built under that frightful shadow. The mountains had become giants and inhabited the land. Now, coming down nearer to the lower tarn, the upper basin was quite hidden. That lower shore, which we never reached, lay open in our direction to the rocky amphitheatre, but was shut in at the back by that black wall of rock, higher than any wall built by hands, and horrible because of the menacing flood or potion that it upheld. Both waters must be deep. The one in its rocky chalice the lower, in awful stillness, as though waiting for the mixing of the black ichor. Waiting for a thousand or ten thousand years. With no sound but thunder, or the raging winds that shrieked upon the stones.

The whole effect of the scene was as if some fearful thing, long impending, had been held, dangling, for a millennum, while the entire structure of the landscape was to the purpose that it should fall. Not the setting for a tragedy, but the component rocks of tragedy. It could be some tinge of mountain sickness that put this black meaning into the dumb rocks. But how was it that this drama, without a roof, nor another human being within sight, in the bleak deer forest, was so terrible and beautiful? At all moments the mountains are superb and menacing. It was better to look upon the earth and not lift your eyes up to the black circumvallation. Further down, the valley led still deeper until it ended in a fishing loch which had many brown trout in it. That lay out of sight, perhaps a mile away, and with a wonderful view, we were told, down to the sea and the distant islands.

This landscape of the Icelandic sagas could have been in Iceland, except that, there, it is all recent, or still burning fire. The mountains there are, geologically, of recent origin. Terraces of basalt or obsidian, with boulders of lava or pumice stone, surround the boiling springs. The air smells of sulphur. The only harvest is of eiderdown and seagulls' eggs. But there are salmon rivers, and the whale spouts on the horizon.

A party of Norsemen may have come ashore, here, from Orkney, in a six-oared 'sixern', to net the salmon river, or kill the deer upon the hills.

## *Sutherland*

They will have known Arcuil, and some who had by heart the sagas may have looked upon this scene, and wondered if it had a meaning. Nothing, here, will have changed. A rock or two may have rolled lower. The tarn, itself, have gone blacker, deeper. This landscape is not Gaelic in imagery. It belongs to the builders of the brochs and megaliths. To the Picts, who may have been of the same origin as the Lapps, and when those disappeared from history, to the Norsemen. But towards the limits of their penetration, lying in the poetic distance, where, what, to our experience, is Northern, meets the Norsemen's conception of the South, where there is gold in the river sands and there are pearls for barter.

Here, and along the Western coast, are mountains and islands that are as wonderful as any in the world. Staffa with its columns of basalt, the Black Cuolins, the stormy Shnants. It is fitting that they should be terrible as well as beautiful. Love for the mountains, and the terror and beauty they inspire, comes and goes with the mutations of the human spirit. There was an age of enlightenment in which the only sentiment they roused was one of horror. A sight of the mountains was as awful as a voyage at sea. In our time, until our age began to burn, they stood for what was ageless and eternal, by contrast to the tinted petal or the golden leaf. There is need of a huge hand and a huge imagination to depict these things. Arcuil is but a mountain among many. But few persons will have heard its name, or known how gigantic are the images along this stretch of coast. For the mountains alter even as you look at them. From another angle it could be a different mountain altogether. It is in this respect that they are like persons in a drama, for the motive changes. Often, and for long days together, they are obscured by the damp mists. Nothing betrays them but the headlong waterfalls. And the discoloured waters that pour into the loch. Or, if you listen for it, the howling of the wind upon the high rocks.

But we would have done with names of mountains. It is enough that in one corner of our land there should be such eternal evidences. Like great music they are the property of those who love them. In the sense that they can mean many things, and that their meaning changes according to the mood. It may, even, be that in the mysteries of great music there lies the supreme mystery of all. It does not do to think for ever of such things, nor to look for ever upon the mountains. For they inspire terror and exaltation. The brow of the mountain may be uncovered by a cloud. Most of the time it is hidden in mist, like a statue draped in sackcloth. It stands aloof and not familiar. In the same way music must be heard many times, but there must be dark nights and long winters so that it breaks afresh upon the ear. Yet it is one of the wonders of music that among the lesser things there are many that can be heard, from early childhood, and that never lose their beauty. Also, that, in the case of great music, some of the supreme masterpieces of the human spirit, revealing the godhead, are lovely and wonderful in their inaccessibility. Again, the genius of God in man is manifest in the divine inspiration of those who, in certain instances, have not been able to read a

## *Down to the plain*

note of music We hope, in humility, to test or prove this in its categories  
As, here, upon a mountain

For we return along the same rough track, climbing until the upper  
tarn is seen again in dread suspense above the lower<sup>er</sup>, and over the shoul-  
der of that stony hill down to where the distant isles lie in that halcyon  
stillness, far out, but beside the mountain, and so, down again, past the  
round loch where the stag had run, that morning, to the long descent  
with the steep drop falling to the left hand side, and so, to the last height  
of all, where the lake lies far below, and the precipitous path comes down  
through a pinewood to the empty plain Then, over the hill above the  
grove of holly trees, and along the shore of the loch where it dwindles  
into the water lilies Here is a white wooden bridge over the swift salmon  
river The light thickens, and it has come on to rain

## Book Two

# THE CLOUD OF WITNESS

'In Rome he (i.e.) Hector Berlioz schemed an immense composition in which a mock Day of Judgment staged by an Anti-Christ is interrupted by the real one'

*Hector Berlioz*, by TOM S. WOTTON,  
(Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 161, 162

'The scene draws, and discovers a heaven of blood, two suns, spirits in battle, arrows shot to and fro in the air, cries of yielding persons, cries of "Carthage is fallen"'

NATHANIEL LEE (c. 1653-1692)

### 1. The Three Witnesses

We will hear the evidence of the younger of the witnesses first, and then that of the two women.<sup>1</sup>

#### (a) *Mabel T*

Mabel T is fifteen years old. She was born in 1871.

For obvious reasons our evidence has to be taken more than fifty years ago. But that little difference, or anachronism, really does not matter, for our civilization, even then, was hurrying quickly to its end. The revaluing of all values had begun already. Such are the facts. But the purpose of this narrative is to frighten and alarm, to break or stultify the normal vision. Before it is too late. And to prepare an open mind for what may, or may not come to happen.

Mabel T, then, will be sixteen in April. She looks more childish than her age. But again, sometimes, I wonder if she is not eighteen or nineteen. Perhaps there is some mystery about it. In her picture she wears her brother's cricket blazer. At her home they are very proud of him. He gave it to her, and her mother altered it to fit her. It is cherry red and white, in stripes. When they brought her here, she was wearing it. And they encourage her to do so, because it comforts her.

<sup>1</sup> The three characters, here described, have been inspired by photographs in *Mad Humanity*, by L. Forbes Winslow, London, C. A. Pearson Ltd., 1898. They appear upon pages 276 and 222 of that volume, and represent types of hysterical mania and of hallucinations of seeing and hearing. It is a curious point that after careful study of these dreadful photographic documents I formed my own opinion that they must be French or Belgian women because it seemed to me that they should be addressed as Madame or as Mademoiselle. My surmise was correct. The author states in his preface: 'With regard to the photographs, I have obtained these from asylums. I have visited on the continent, and they are the most typical ones I could find to represent the respective forms of mental degeneration I am describing.'

## *The Illuminati*

It was no easy work to take her photograph. She took fright at the tripod of the camera, and at the black hood of the photographer. It was only after perhaps an hour, when the man and his machine had become a part of the furniture of the room, that he got a picture of her. The local photographer, merely, from the town a mile or two away, who undertook every kind of work, but he had some queer adventures when he came to photograph the patients. So that, if you could see the whole of his life-work, the tennis groups and temperance groups, the weddings and masonic feasts, the children and their parents, the clergymen and aldermen, this sudden body of portraits in midst of these, in their varying degrees of fright and horror, would be a sensation to be compared with finding a lot of paintings by Goya in a room of tepid watercolours. These, you would say, are the enlightened, the Illuminati. And heaven help them they have seen something. They are onlookers, or participants, in some appalling drama. Past, or present, or prophetic of the future. But very near. Immediate. Imminent. It is already playing before their eyes.

In her photograph Mabel T. looks as though she was resting after a fit of screaming. You can tell that in the relaxed lines of her attitude. It is as though, at some hysterical meeting of feminists, she has at last stood up and got a hearing. Said exactly what she had to say. Made her protest. And sat down again, still smarting with her wrongs, which is to say that she appears sullen, and her head is sunk a little on her chest. She still feels indignant. But it is something more than that. She is youthful, but her features are as if swollen in certain places, which makes them asymmetrical. The two sides of her face, even in this photograph, are palpably not the same. She is puffed and swollen underneath the eyes, not so much from crying, as from her shrieks and yells which have only just subsided. If you did not know this, you might think from her flushed face, and her blazer, that she has just been running a race, or playing in some game. But not if you look really intently at her. And so long as she does not see that you are examining her. Because, if she did, she would begin, immediately, to scream and yell.

There is something to be learned in the shape of her mouth. It is so unsensual, and undetermined. Petulant, but not at all provoking. Completely, and terrifyingly, without self-control. The prey, entirely, of her hysterical emotions. So that it alters its shape or is completely shapeless. Like a rag in a gale of wind. Mostly, with no expression at all, as though it was the mere instrument of her screams and yells. But not that, only, or for all the time. For the point of it is in its sensitivity. A psychometric barometer, we could call it, not a rain gauge, but an indication, past and future, of her tears. And now the expression of her eyes, from being sullen, has changed to that of being puzzled or bewildered. It is the danger sign. She is recovering her senses. returning to normal. And this, in her case, means that she will wonder why she is not screaming.

Or, of course, she may relapse into a fit of silence. And keep that for several days and nights on end. Until her vow is broken. For it is as



## *Virgo dolorosa*

though she has taken an oath not to speak. She will stay, then, or rather lie upon her bed or upon the floor, if they would let her, with her lips tightly shut. They are scratching and pinching her to make her talk. She is certain of this. Sometimes, red marks and weals come on her legs and arms. Or again, at moments, she smiles. Still with her lips closed. A smile like a reminiscence, or a sensual dream. Unpleasant, not wholly innocent, or not in her imaginings. We would say, looking at her striped blazer, that she waits for some precocious youth on a seaside pier, or in the public shelter.

When she weeps, more still when she shrieks and yells, extraordinary abstract changes come over her features. She is a girl crying, a weeping woman, the *Virgo dolorosa*. The lines of her face, contracted for the act of crying, could be a white napkin, or the cloths they put upon the faces of the dead, crumpled into folds, but so static and permanent, from so much weeping, that there are long pins or arrows that keep the folds in place. These are, of course, lines of shadow and channels for her tears, but they have a peculiar psychical resemblance to the instruments of the Passion. After long moments, perhaps an hour or two of weeping, the face of this poor creature forms its own convenience for tears. Her tongue, and you can see this in young babes who have been crying, tastes their salt and seeks it. Her lower lip turns into the brim or basin of this fountain of salt tears, which slobber down into it, and leave it sore. It has become hardly a human face at all, but rather an abstraction of weeping. This is the young girl of fifteen who, an hour or two ago, had an air of looking for adventure. Until we remember that she is under sentence. They will never release her. It is a hopeless case. As soon speak to the criminal, who is to be hung, of the possibility there once had been of his marriage to the girl he murdered. She can know no sensation but that sort of sensual dream.

It is almost frightening to see the fit of weeping leave her. For no reason. As if she has had enough of that kind of amusement. And she is limp again and expressionless, with that faint smile lurking or hovering, waiting its opportunity. But too weak to take advantage of it. Except that, like all diseases, her insanity is spreading. The diseased cells renew themselves, and multiply. She will look, as she does, unnaturally youthful, and then will, suddenly, grow old. After thirty she will be an old, old woman. Long, long ago, her striped blazer will have faded and been thrown away. She will be wearing the same clothes as the other women. If we could see her, we should not recognize her. But this is her youth, and probably the trouble is because of that.

There are days when no one would know that anything was wrong with her. Then, she wants to go on with her lessons. She gets out the books she has been allowed to bring with her, and reads them patiently. It is a kind of atavism, a harking back to childhood, before the early signs had showed themselves. But it does not last for long. Because it is hopeless for her to concentrate, and the whole of her childhood is lived again in a day or two, until the dreadful shadow comes between. It is the devil



ii



iii

THE THREE WITNESSES  
from 'Mad Humanity' by L. Forbes Winslow



## *Hallucinations of seeing*

entering, and taking possession of her, though, once that happens, in her own senses she is, of course, more sane than ever. Or, indeed, inspired.

When she weeps, we need not feel quite the same pity for her as for a normal person weeping. It leaves her exhausted, physically and nervously, but not in mind or spirit. So the mental specialists will tell us. We wonder do they know? It is certain that the merely imbecile are happy in their way. But not mad persons who are the prey of something. They must suffer and be terrified. There can be no doubt of it. They can be part soul or too much soul. Aural or visual hallucinations haunt them. How is it, then, that they do not die of nervous exhaustion? Because, in a sinister way, they thrive upon this. It torments them, but, as in the case of some kinds of dreams, it is an entertainment designed to keep them occupied. This, in fact, is the jangling of their nerves, which have to jangle. Otherwise, they would lose their stimulus, and the physical body would collapse, or sag.

Hers is a case of visual obsession. It crept in, softly, like a ghost. In the beginning it was no more than that, until it fixed itself upon her vision, a mote, a sunspot that nothing would obliterate, bringing psychic or electric storms that swept her world to its foundations. How did this speck, or splinter, go into her eye? It came from within and floated itself upon the surface. Any force, or pressure drove it further in. Nothing could dislodge it. Like all ghosts, this hallucination had no corporeal body except that, and this is the curious feature, the form of this haunting was that it inhabited living persons, haphazard, and for no apparent reason. It was not long before she became violent, and had to be taken from her home. This account was written when it only teased or puzzled her, before it turned into a lifelong torment. About a month, or more, before her photograph was taken. While she only brooded, and would spend whole days together in her sullen silence. Already she was living in another perspective inhabited by real and unreal.

But here is her story, taken down in her own words.

'My first experience was a year or two ago, perhaps less. I cannot tell. I saw him out of the window of the dining room, crossing under the laurels. He stood there for a moment, but did not seem to see me. Nevertheless he knew that I was there. He had come on purpose. For a few days nothing happened. There was no sign of him. Then, one afternoon I was sent into the post office to buy stamps, and he came up near as if he had a message for me. That time, he was dressed as a shabby old woman. I knew the old woman. I had seen her before, but I knew that it was him. He said nothing. If he had a message for me it was not necessary that she should speak. Two or three weeks later he got into the tram with us, and started talking to my mother. First, as a person who soon got out, and then as another person who came and sat beside her. I knew both persons, they were acquaintances of my mother, but I could not mistake him in them.

Soon he came to the house to deliver a parcel. My father unknotted the string and took it to his room. A little after that he was sweeping leaves as

### *'Fresh haddocks!'*

our old gardener It was the same face, but he had changed his age I never knew where he would be next Dr Cltheroe often comes here to see my mother One day he was his coachman, and I saw him feed the horses, and take their nosebags off, and drive away Next time it was not the same There was nothing strange about the coachman He did not look at me Neither did the other, but I know he noticed me Then he took to appearing as a child who walked along the Gardens, and sometimes drove a hoop I knew that child well, or, at least, I knew its cousins I did not like to ask them They would have thought it funny We used to meet, and he would never look at me There was a woman who came round with a fish barrow You could hear her calling out her fish all over the town I saw him, another time, at the cab rank He was going into the cab shelter, and he came out again to look at me I suppose he has a message for me I met a man in a shiny hat in a very bad condition, coming down the steps towards me He was too much got up, but not drunk Soon after, I heard in the distance the woman with a fish barrow, but over at the far end of the town I began to know when I should see him, because I heard her calling

Then he started to absent himself If you ask me what he was like to look at I could not tell you Because he changed every time He is the ghost of someone, I am certain of that You never think without making a noise I hear voices in the room and behind the walls I have lain awake counting them I have plainly distinguished them Two of them strike me as the voices of women One voice is particularly clear and loud Not all the voices are of evil spirits They tell me what to do, but contradict themselves The pierrot from the sands came past here every morning I used to hear the woman with the fish barrow as he came by No one knows how much I suffer My mother has no idea of it My uncle came in to see me I had asked to talk to him He spoke to me for some time Not liking what he said, I looked more carefully at him, he was dressed like my uncle, but I noticed one of his feet was just like that of an ox He told me he would torture me if I did not swear to kill my family, which at last I did I have seen bullocks or oxen in the market, and their meat hanging in the butchers' shops No one can deceive me That is one of the messages I have been given The days have become much darker since I was a child No one dares to show a light I can foresee a time when children are taken from their mothers, and there are noises of whirrings and big bangings everywhere Voices, too, of unseen persons, and sounds of music I am too occupied, at present, to think of it' And here her statement ends

### *(b) Mrs Demdike*

There is this difference between Mrs Demdike and our third witness, that she is not evil Her expression, quite simply, is of appalling terror Look at her photograph, and you will see there is no neck It is a head and shoulders The stalk, or stem, of pride has gone down into the body We have all of us had dreams which were so horrible that they haunted us

## *Terror struck*

after we were awake This person lives, or dwells, in one of those In that dreadful realism of detail that exceeds any experience in life No statement could possibly be taken from her It would be too disjointed and incoherent.

Her skin is yellow and reptilian Or like brown parchment It may be the symptom of her diseased state It is as though she is stained with the juice of nicotine, or walnut juice, as used by one of the most famous of criminals when he wished to disguise himself as a mulatto <sup>1</sup> Her hands are the same colour But you do not see them in the picture Not only her uplifted shoulders, as in a convulsion or spasm of horror, but the attitude of her arms, tell us of the Armageddon, or the Day of Judgment, of which she is perpetual witness But as in some appalling nightmare, she cannot frame the words to tell us She is frozen with terror rooted to the ground Those conventional terms are true She has lost the faculty of speech, and in this moment, cannot scream or shout It is as effective as though the tormenting demons had cut through her vocal cord, anew, before each fit of madness This is done, in bull fights, to the horses so that they cannot scream, and they are led, as well, blindfolded, to the bull She is as helpless as the old nag of the bull fight Would, too, that her eyes were bandaged! For have you seen her eyes? They are perfectly round, and fixed, and open As transfixed with terror, on this ten thousandth night, as upon the first time that she descended into hell They are rather like the eyes of an owl in shape, not in expression, except that owls are said to freeze the blood of rats and mice with terror by merely looking at them, and that same cold stare must be reflected back in their own rodent eyes before they die of it So her look of terror is the immediate reaction to what she sees And, in view of the extraordinary nature of her delusions, like the owl, like the nocturnal birds of prey, she sees in the dark The eyes are contracted until they consist of little else than pupil, and are like black circles in her immensely distended eyeballs Those, if we would know the truth, are not white so much as bluish, or having the resolution to come nearer her, brown as if stained with coffee grounds

Her forehead is deeply furrowed owing to that distorted stare The appalling look of terror, which has become fixed and permanent, has left great dark marks under and above her eyes, more horrible from the fact of their being dark, flaccid pouches upon her discoloured skin, dyed and stained with her disease Indeed, the whole of her features are contorted by her stare of terror The skin of her nose is drawn tight and made aquiline by it The hair of her head, we must notice, is no longer male or female It is like the hair of some animal, beginning to get bald, and thinned out by worry But we will follow down her features The strain of that stare has made deep lines on either side of her nose, which go to the corners of her mouth, and are completed, as it were, by her lower lip For her mouth is open Continually open In mute horror Her lips, therefore have lost their shape of lips It is only a mouth And the lips would seem to

<sup>1</sup> Charles Peace

## *The musty smell*

be dry, thick or swollen, and of a pale or dirty white, not red, upon her brown parchment skin. If you look at the whole of her features and their expression, the secondary meaning could be put into words of indignation. 'I have never seen such a thing', as she continues her stare of terror after the vision has just faded. She will sit in that attitude for the remainder of the day, hardly moving. One shoulder is raised higher than the other. It is a pity that we cannot see her hands. But it is as though she has just raised her arms in terror, and now, helplessly, has let her hands fall upon her lap. In actual fact, this is her fixed position, the pose she is thrown into by the evil things she sees.

She is dressed in black. It could be a black satin gown, or one of those dark materials which, during the last century, had such far-fetched names. It appears to have black velvet or velveteen, with many buttons, down the centre, and, presumably, a black velvet collar. But this is obscure in the photograph. One end of a lace ribbon hangs down in front, upon her chest, and there must be more lace round her neck, but it has disappeared. All might have been designed on purpose for effect. That vertical line of velvet, with the buttons, like a black backbone with its vertebrae, and the dragged bit of lace that dangles upon it, her hunched or curving shoulders, the animal shortness of her hair in a time when women wore their hair in curls and ringlets, all helps that brown parchment skin, and leads up to her staring eyes. We are aware of a musty smell, which grows more horrible as we think of it. Not just the rubbed and shining bombazine. It is the smell of a mad person. Of a human being, become animal, and imprisoned in a small room. Her cage, or den. Is there something feline, or particularly feminine in it? We would not like to say. It is the smell of all lunatics.

Why dress the poor creature up like that? A generation or two earlier she would have been a naked madwoman lying, in irons, upon a bed of straw. Covered, it may be, by a blanket formed into something like a gown. Chained to her crib, in darkness, through all the winter cold. The madwoman of tradition. How do they continue to dress her? It is a gown which buttons up the middle, which does not have to go over the head. What a work it must be to get her arms into her sleeves! A madwoman who has to be fed by mechanical means, according to the brutal usage of the time, and who cannot perform the necessary functions of her body without assistance. Who is torpid, rigid with terror. Who is incapable of coherent speech for weeks together, while the visions continue, and then mumbles in disjointed phrases, and can no longer describe what she has seen. But a horrible detail is that her bodily strength continues. It is as though her demons feed her. She has been reduced to the exact state in which they can prey upon her. They give her, it could be said, no more, nor less, than is needed to keep her alive. So that, in a sinister sense, it is true that she responds to it.

And now we come to the third witness

### (c) *Old Chattox*<sup>1</sup>

A different case altogether. She appears to have been an inmate of the same asylum, for she wears the same dress, which may have been the asylum uniform. Can we have been mistaken, we wonder, over the blazer worn by Mabel T? Supposing, after all, that it was the summer dress of the younger patients, and not her brother's cricket blazer? No one will know, now. It is too long ago. So we continue. It is the same black dress, but worn with a different air. Take notice of her hands. We will come to her clothes later, and then to the true Chattox, which is in her face. Her hands are folded, one upon another, in obvious contentment. But they give the first clue. Those are no human hands. Not the hands of a normal being. They are the hands of an ape. It is the preternaturally long palms of the hands before the fingers begin. And the shape of the fingers themselves, the way they are folded. But, of course, they are white, not furry. How long they are! What a long way they come out from her sleeves! We would say she sits for hours together with folded hands. The right hand holds the left wrist, and has made a mark upon the black material of the dress. The hands of an ape which is trying to imitate a human being, and has seen its master or mistress sitting with hands folded in this position. We are waiting for her to extend her fingers and take hold of something. Her long wrists and the edges of her palms will be almost more creepy than her fingers.

Now look at her black dress. The shoulders are two perfect arcs, complacent and unruffled. Put another head upon her shoulders and it could be the *Impératrice Eugénie* in middle age, wearing slight mourning. Most women in those times were perpetually in mourning. It was the sign of respectability. And it had come down into the middle classes. There are the thin lines of a starched collar, hardly visible, round her neck. Clean, or fairly clean linen. And, it may be, a tie or lappet of black velvet. Not that bedraggled, that torn end of lace. The whole dress fits up close beneath the chin. Her shoulders are those, not of a stout person, but of someone of height and presence. A deaconess, a mother superior. That, perhaps, is what this ape-like creature imagines herself to be. Or, unconsciously, she has followed that pattern, and her clothes have taken that shape. It must be a long full skirt that reaches to the ground. An even walk, a gliding without footsteps, only, occasionally, we would see a pair of thick black boots. The boots, precisely, of a priest or monk.

Her hair is parted in the middle. Brushed, quite tidily, to either side. Straight hair, in any case, that parts easily. It gives an effect of balance, and composes naturally with her shoulders and her folded hands. Until you look closer, her whole bearing could be that of a person of intense respectability who is engaged upon 'rescue work', and labours in the slums of some great city. Not, however, if you remember the formation

<sup>1</sup> I have named these two women Demdike and Old Chattox after the Lancashire witches. Mabel T is, of course, my invention also. But the three women will have had names of French or Belgian connotation.



## *La Tricoteuse*

of her hands As we said before, they are the earliest clue The hair and the hands, together, should make you suspicious And the hair, incidentally, is continued down her face She has definite hairy whiskers which are obliterated in the photograph You can only see the wisps of them, like a smudge upon the carbon It is a big face, oval shaped, and with the chin and lower jaw answering, exactly, to the crown of her head, above the parting A forehead which is very white, without much expression, but combines with the whole features into their effect of madness The secret is in her eyes, and nose, and mouth Her eyes are watching continually For she, too, has visual hallucinations She is looking, therefore, over, and above, and through you, even if the spectacle is not showing at the moment The persons in the room with her are not of primary importance She sees them, but does not take much notice of them Her eyes, even, are screwed up a little with the strain of watching So much is evident in the compression of her eyebrows, and from the straight line of her lower eyelids, proving that this is her habitual attitude

Her nose is large and prominent, aquiline and somewhat thick, too big in proportion almost, a masculine nose upon features that are not soft or feminine Not the face of an old maid Once again, we would call her a deaconess Those persons who have been to the Grand Bégumage, at Bruges, might place her in authority there among the lace makers, close to the swans and canals, in that dead town where the clocks are for ever chiming That is to say she must, at times, wear a bonnet But all that is fantasy It is years since she has been outside the institution What is true is that her features have become swollen in the course of her disease For she has been here since she was a youngish woman Her mouth is the mouth of a religious person The closed lips express the same sentiment as the folded hands But there is no chin Nothing to balance the forehead and the nose Only the roundness of the lower jaw Her face has been moulded, or altered by disease, not by will Nor by life's emotions, because she has had none She has been tossed to and fro upon an internal storm, which was all fiction and not real Of which she has been spectator, not participant She has been saved but witnesses the tortures of the damned She is the tricoteuse who knits, or has put away her knitting, and day after day, night after night, she sits below the guillotine But it is not so simple as that The heads do not drop, one by one, into the bloodstained basket That would be monotonous She is not one of those lunatics who are calculators, and but play with numbers It is a drama of religion, not the spectres of revolution Nightmare shapes from which she is, herself, immune That is where Chattox is different from Demdike And she is so sure of this immunity that what she sees does not frighten her She is even asked, sometimes, to help in it Like the mother of the public executioner whom Smollett saw in Dijon, when he went through France, who, after dark, by the flames of a bonfire which she had lit, assisted her son to break some robbers alive upon the wheel <sup>1</sup> Smollett tells of the ten blows of the short iron bar which were given to each robber, one to each two

## *The Deaconess*

joints of all four limbs, to break them, of their sickening sound, and of the double blow, the *coup de grâce*, to crush the heart within the ribs. After it was done, mother and son sold the clothes of those they killed. Such, or something of the sort, were the visual treats of this woman whom we call the deaconess, upon evenings when, in her imagination, she came out from the *Béguinage* for an hour or two, into the town.

At the least, it was an incessant persecution, a frightening and horrible spectacle to which she had become accustomed, but which never lost its interest for her. As how could it? For it played perpetually before her eyes. A peepshow of demonolatry, as large as life, and taking place inside the room. Perhaps it was the crowding in that small space which gave the room its musty smell. For, to her eyes, it was never empty. Her visions had, of course, degenerated, and become richer by their degradation. And, always, she was the one person who was untouched by them. Whatever happened, she was always safe. That was one manner in which the mania afflicted her. Therefore, it had become something of a pleasurable sensation. She never smiled but, certainly, she was satisfied and complacent. It may be we are misjudging her. She will not have sold the clothing of the robbers whom she helped her son to break upon the wheel. For she has no idea of money. She is a poor old madwoman. Not so old, though, or so absentminded. She has most precise visions, perfect in every detail. And not a frail woman. There is physical strength in those hands. The whole pose in the photograph is that of a person of memory and determination. She is about sixty years old, or not much more than that. An uneducated woman, who argued and knew everything before her hallucinations made her silent. Her malady is not religious mania. It is not so reasonable. It is the melting or liquefaction of all images, and their disintegration. The world, and everything in it, goes to destruction. She is the chosen witness, and no harm will come to her. It is the placid wickedness of those who watch and do not try to interfere. She is comfortably settled in her front row seat. That is the way her days and nights are spent. Without pity, not even wondering at what she sees, but enjoying the spectacle. Not conscious that it is projected by her own disordered brain. The sum of these experiences has given her a superior air. She is sitting in judgment, to the extent that all is done with her approval, and her perpetual compliance, did she but know it, is proof that all the visions come from within.

Another look at her hands might make us argue that she had children. To this degree her ape-like hands are in contradiction to her face, which is so typical of the deaconess, the older, and confirmed virgin, who is set to watch the other virgins and pry into their affairs. The invigilator at the examination of all sins. It is the post for which she has schooled herself for all these years. The attendants would tell you she has grown into it. There is something almost comical in the contrast between her clasped hands and her hair parted in the middle, or her black satin shoulders. Except that there is nothing funny in this fanatic. She could be the statue, the coloured waxwork, of a large part of the human race. Of a

## *She plucked out her eyes*

trend in their affairs, at all times, and among all nations Her identity is a mystery we shall never know But that does not matter She is among the witnesses Her hallucinations are of present, or of impending truth Human beings have been willing through the centuries to let themselves be confined and imprisoned within fantasies not less extreme than these which haunt her brain, or what is left of it Many phases of the world are no madder than her prognostications Eternal damnation, heaven and hell, or total war, were not the inventions of her conscience She but embroiders them It is not a raging whirlwind, like the mind of that other maniac, but she watches patiently, and it works to her advantage

It is not dumbshow She has hallucinations of hearing as well as seeing That is why she sits so still and hardly moves The pantomime has been so continuous that she has lost the power to criticize She is acquiescent She agrees with everything It distils from her It impregnates the room in which she lives Those walls should be haunted, if they are still standing sixty years later, by a weakminded middle-aged woman, dressed in black, by shadows on the walls themselves, and by one or two of the voices that she heard By a movement in the middle of the night as though someone who had been sitting still, or lying in bed without moving, made a slight movement, and then was still again Through the walls we hear wild yells and screams And laughter far down the corridor The woman with the fish barrow calls all through the building The victim of that obsession afterwards plucked out both her eyes, obeying her voices, and lived for years as a blind and violent lunatic The other wrecked and diseased beings raved, or spun their crooked webs But this woman kept patient till the end, with one hand clasped upon the other, in that room which smelt like a wild beast's den

## 2. Dulle Griet

Perhaps it is better that this should be written in a time of rampant madness For it imposes order

The Old Believers are driven out in bands into the forests That has happened before, and it happens now We could have heard them singing in their choirs, while the torch was put to the wooden buildings and all the living fell down into the flames Now they suffer meekly and are inarticulate The drones fly into the bonfire and are suffocated in it Indeed, it has been lit to smoke them out The fires are red, red, red

But, first of all, we will have a woman running from the flames A mad or half-wit woman, by the name of Dulle Griet She has a man's steel helmet and steel breastplate buckled on her breast There is blood upon her helmet and it has run down upon her nose, she holds a sword in her right hand, and a basket is upon her other arm filled with pots and pans and every kind of kitchen utensil, some of which, by accident, have formed themselves into a human face Or it could be a fish's nose and eyes and mouth She carries everything except her eyeshades, gas oint-

## *The oasthouse*

ment, and her respirator. Except for those, Dulle Griet is one of ourselves fleeing from the flames. In any tongue of the five continents.

The horizon soars and pants with fires, and at this moment is poppy red, but dulls down. Not for long. It is white hot, and burns up again behind a hill. We do not know, at present, whether it is town or country. It could be leagues of burning forest, or a hundred thatched villages on fire in the plain. A huge city, too, or just the fires of hell. Let us try to determine where we are. An object like a huge jug belching smoke, that could be a gigantic incinerator on the outskirts of a town. Something extraordinary stretches straight into the distance, and this might be the moonlit runway of an aerodrome.

Over there are sheds with wheels on the top, like those above the shafts of coal mines, and some of the hills are clinker heaps. There has been a battle among the collieries, in and out of the mine buildings, but they are pyramids and Roman ruins. For a time, only. There is the mast of a ship with all its rigging, and at the top a wheel like a ship's wheel, and a great bell attached, that is ringing. A man, carrying a ship's boat on his shoulder, is making off as fast as he can go and rides upon the thatched roof of a house. One of his starved and emaciated limbs, the leg of a deformed cripple, lies straight out before him upon the roof, and in monstrous parody he beats himself along with a saucepan as though he were a hobbyhorse. The boat is full of minute persons, variously occupied, and floats in a sort of bubble or vacuum, as though all contained in a soap bubble, through the concave sides of which we see a little landscape in a prism.

There is a brick tower, something like a Kentish oasthouse, that has a mouth and nose and eyes, and a birdcage hanging from its apex, which is curved into a peak. Out of this mouth or tunnel a lot of frogs come somersaulting or playing tricks. One of them offers the madwoman its head which it holds up in a hand. Near to it, there are other nightmare forms. Frogs' legs with a skewer stuck in them, a barrel creeping forward contrariwise to its rolling motion on four hands, with a face, and since it has no head, a Slovak peasant's bowler hat upon the barrel's rim. Nightmares of the frog's anatomy, for instance, the front legs and shoulders of a frog with its long and skinny hands, a saucepan instead of a head, and that holds in correct position a fishing rod and line upon the hook of which a huge egg is caught, filling an entire nest, and the egg has been chipped open and holds as many embryos as the ship's boat has persons in it.

There are, also, crayfish forms come to earth, and a creature like a beaked frog, the intestines of which have been gutted. In the foreground it is a fantasy upon the egg, the frog, the tadpole. We may be reminded in this of a curious old German book, *Historia Naturalis Ranarum*, by A. J. Roesel von Rosenhof, Nuremberg, 1758, for that work is a fantasy upon the dissection of frogs. In its handcoloured plates, that are incredible in detail, we see the frog pegged down to be opened with the knife. In every case it is as though the frog was crucified, not raised upon a cross, but pegged out upon the ground. Its four feet, which are so like hands, are

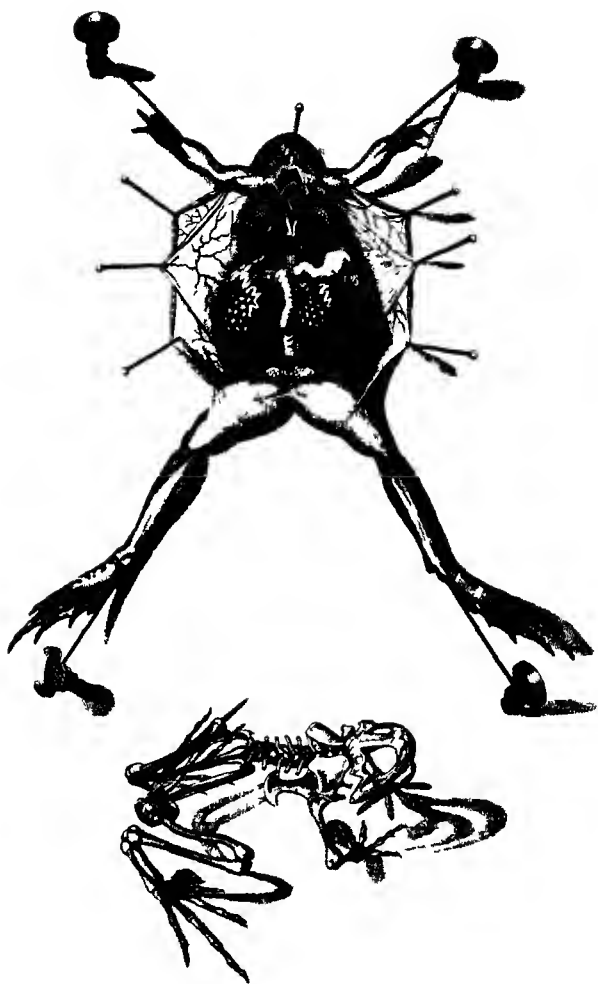
## *Animal phantasms*

drawn out to the full extent of the limb and lashed down to four heavy iron pins or staples which are driven into the dissecting table. The frog's belly is uncovered in its pathetic nudity, we see its head laid back and the underneath of its pathetic, frog-like chin. The markings and stippings of its skin are rendered in every particular, but the dissection has begun, and in every succeeding plate the viscera, down to the skeleton of the frog, are given in the same painstaking manner in all their colours. So are the angles and shadows of the dissecting table, and, sometimes, the knife and scalpel are laid beside the frog as instruments of this long drawn passion that worked the flaying and withering of this humble creature. There are, also, the skeletons of frogs, that have the look of fourfooted birds, standing or crawling with the penthouse shadow of their ribs attached, at an angle, to them. The complete skeleton, in every articulation of its bones, may be at the foot of the frog that is bound upon the cross. In that we get the contrast of the grey bones of death, that have no colour, with the livid and expiring hues of the living.

The execution is as startling here, as we see in the brickwork of that oasthouse face, with the many marks or blemishes upon it, and the outline of a tree in early leaf shown against it. An awning is spread out upon it instead of an eyelid to one eye, there are little nightmare figures that have no point at all, but are pure fantasy, particularly where a ruined house becomes a watermill and creatures akin to the animal phantasms of the spiritualists walk along the walls, or warm their hands at a red cloak hanging up, instead of at a fire. At their back there is a wall through which the branches of the tree obtrude, emerging above three copper pots which are fixed up on the stones to fill with rain.

But attention wanders to the red horizon and its panting fires, over a morass where two human beings are stranded on a sandbank. A huge ovoid form, like an egg set up on end, is a tower, also, but its masonry is shattered so that we see the yolk inside, from out of which what appears to be an immense harp tilts forth, but its strings are a spider's web, and we see the spider in the middle of it. A cage rises above this, which is thatched, and upon that thatched roof four or five mice are dancing, but they are the mouse homunculus, like the mice of children's toys that are dressed up in little coats and jackets, and there is a smaller roof of thatch above them. It even becomes a thatched pagoda, for there is still another thatched roof, smaller still, but making three in all. Behind them the whole horizon is red, red, red with fire. What can the meaning be? In the market towns of China, far in the interior, there are men to be met with whose livelihood consists in carrying round a wicker cage. Inside the cage there is a rat. The trick they play is, for a coin, to push a burning brand or a straw dipped in paraffin between the bars, in order that the rat should dance and run about the cage, and cower in the corner.

But the spate of frogs or tadpoles is not done. It could have rained with them. A high ship's mast rises up out of a turret, above another building, with masthead and long bannerol that floats from it, and in the rigging and upon the turret there are frogs that climb with pails upon their



DISSECTION OF A FROG  
by A J Roesel von Rosenhof



## Home Guard

heads, holding with one hand to the ropes. A frog stands upon its head with the staff of a rope walker or equilibrist in its hands, upon a chimney pot. Behind that is a white haze of molten fire, and a perpetual tocsin of bells ringing away into the distance. No doubt, the alert, too, upon the screeching sirens, while the wardens sound their rattles for gas.<sup>1</sup>

In the foreground it could be a modern battle training school. Hand-to-hand fighting is continuous, between men and women. Faces are blacked, with dirt from the exhaust pipe of the motor engine. It is unarmed combat, but for the knife, and perhaps housewives have an advantage for they are used to trussing ducks and chickens. Would it interest you to hear some stories of what happened during the preliminary bombardment from the air?

The eighteen stone woman who lived next door was lifted a hundred yards out of her bedroom, when the roof came off, and was stuck, flat, high up upon the wall of a public house. She is still there. They have not moved her. As to someone's mother-in-law who lived, here, in this house, she went entirely. Nothing was left of her. We found her brains, the day before yesterday, and buried them in the back garden.<sup>2</sup>

The hand-to-hand fighting is in progress upon a causeway between the houses. A little black devil, like a newt, clings to the parapet and watches it. His two front legs and one hind leg grip the top, and he can balance with his tail. In the bed of the river, or it is probably a canal, a number of persons are coming out of an archway in a brick building. There is fighting down in the town sewers. A number of the enemy have climbed down the manholes in the street pavements. It may go on, down there, for days. The reinforcements coming out from the archway all wear the old fashioned, hooded respirators. They could be brothers of the Misericordia in their cowls. But not dressed in black. Members of a cofradia forming up for a *paso* or procession in the *Semana Santa*? Dressed all in white from cowl to foot, or like the Dominicans in black and white. They are carrying the *Virgen del Gran Poder*. We shall hear the harsh trumpet and the drum, and the wailing cry of the *saeta* as the statue is borne past. Those are Gitanos of Triana, which is the Gypsy suburb.

The cranking, just now, was like a tank column, down, next to Marks and Spencer's. Yes! that is it. Opposite the bronze statue of Queen Victoria. Near the granite lavatory upon the island in the middle of the street. Where the Green Line buses stop. These women fight like tigers. They have fairly got three men down, and are finishing them. A Home Guard is jabbing with his bayonet at a pig with wings. In midst of it all a man sits at a table playing cards. The whole air smells of fire. Wherever you look, in the distance there are blackened stumps of towers. But the Battle of the Bridge goes on. If we call the battle by a name in the newspapers, we are sure to lose it. There will be a big announcement in the news to-night, at nine p.m. Be sure you listen! We shall all be tuning in.

<sup>1</sup> These pages have been inspired by the painting of Dulle Griet by Pieter Bruegel in the Mayer van den Bergh collection at Antwerp.

<sup>2</sup> The 'blitz' at Nuneaton.



### *'Softening-up'*

All doctors and nurses are ordered to report immediately for duty In fact, the balloon has gone up

And, having gone up, the balloon is coming down

It was unexpected, at least, that we should have to fight animals A number of persons have been caught on their way home from work And a woman has given birth to a baby in a tram They are dropping flares and incendiaries This is just to light the fires, many of which were left burning from last night The big stuff will come later One family has fled in safety to an islet in the duckpond in the public park They have rowed out to it in the park keeper's little boat, and are hiding in the thatched hut among the mandarin ducks and carolinas Many others, have been trapped and drowned in cellars, when they hit the water mains Gas and electricity are cut off, and there is no answer from the telephone How can one keep calm and think of other things?

### 3. San Antonio Abad and the Beggars

This is what we see next A high, red brick castle with a moat and a pair of swans upon an evening when the poor are waiting to be fed A rich man's house in the land of red brick houses In the land of bridges Not far from Bruges or Ghent But, in fact, it is pure imagination What we shall see, in the polyglot tongue of the Middle Ages, is San Antonio Abad starting off from his house in order to renounce the world, and riding away to the remote and solitary place which he has chosen for his hermitage Nor does it matter that the name San Antonio Abad is in Castilian St Anthony was an Egyptian, but it has no more significance than when the Gypsies say they come from Thebes

The red brick house has reality we could count the red bricks, brick by brick but the rest is nightmare fantasy, foreshadowing his temptations in the desert At the moment he is in an upper room, stroking the head of his hound for the last time The moral of his renunciation is that he should be an ordinary rich man, and therefore the signs of his wealth are not exaggerated He is even, according to the curious undercurrents of the mediaeval mind, a rather comic figure, someone who, in our own day, might appear over and over again in the cartoons in newspapers, and since the average of the human being is impossible to depict, the emphasis is, always, over, or below the normal He is leaving all his worldly goods behind him, and bids farewell to his family and to the servants His clothes are a long gown and a high crowned hat, with no brim, while it is essential that he is a person whom we should not quickly recognize, but that, as in the crowded mediaeval paintings, he has to be looked for in the picture Indeed, from now on, he is of no more importance The spectral world teems and pullulates around him He has climbed into the saddle, allowing no hand to help him, and rides from the door without looking back

It is at this moment that we see him

## *Mardi-Gras*

In the background, over his head, there is an open vault or cellar in which there stands a table and a barrel upon a trestle. Round it there are some drunken figures. But there is no time to notice them because of the mummers or masquers in a round enclosure like a ring fence, or a bull fight held in a stockade. It stands beside the beer cellar. Who are they? What can they be? Those are not fools in cap and bells. They are parti-coloured, like the fool, we can see that even in the intricacy of their dance, but, at first glance, they are half hieroglyph, half human being, like the painted figures in a Mayan codex. Could they be dancers of the carnival or mardigras from Binche, the little town near Brussels, where a fête was instituted by Mary of Hungary, sister of Charles V and Regent of the Netherlands, in 1540, in order to celebrate the conquest of Peru? The dancers wear gigantic headdresses of ostrich plumes, and in course of the procession there is a mock battle in which oranges are the missiles. We cannot tell. The dates do not tally. But the mummery is of exotic origin, and, to ourselves, it has the Mayan likeness.

Round and round they go. It is a morris dance of drolls, or men dressed up as animals. Their capers call for the cap and bells, and for the bladder on a stick, but, also, it has meanings that we do not apprehend. If it be animal metamorphosis, the changes are as abstract as those of African or Mayan sculpture. We have the feeling that, while we look at them, some other drama is preparing nearer to us, or immediately before our eyes, but we cannot turn away. We see in them the plumed bird and the jaguar, and their piebald markings must be for night and day. Or it is a serpent dance, and the snake is devouring birds and deer. Why should they dance when St Anthony is setting forth to be an anchorite? It can only be to point to some sort of wickedness or folly that he is leaving. But the mediaeval mind was not wholehearted in its censure. The mummers are here as much for their own sakes as for any moral reason. There is sure to be a figure dressed with skull and bones among them, two-headed figures also, not, like Janus, facing to both sides, but with head and body different on front and back. These masquers should have Mexican or Mayan names. Their play continues while San Antonio Abad rides away.

He comes out into the campus or piazza of the beggars. Two or three of them are behind the brick parapet of the little bridge leading to his doorstep. In Bruges or Ghent there were many such houses with the canal before the door. The house of red bricks is real. But the beggars are like a dreadful nightmare, and they carry the scene into an altogether different world, which is the reason why we speak of San Antonio Abad instead of St Anthony, because in the sound of that name are collected, also, the beggars of the hot South, and in the last of those three words we seem to hear and witness the giving of alms at the door.

Come down, therefore, and lose yourselves among the beggars! It is the same sensation as if we, ourselves, were on horseback and looking down upon them. San Antonio Abad looks neither to the right, nor to the left of him. He rides on. But they swarm round him, like cockroaches that

## *Culs-de-jatte*

come out of the walls. They crawl out from their corners. They rise up out of the dust. We sense the smell of them, and the scuffling and clattering as they rush forward. The smell is an animal stench, which is yet human and not beast or creature, but, also, it is of wet clothes which are never taken off the body, but are impregnated with sweat and with the smoke of little fires, until they have become a hide or integument to themselves. A horny sweetness that nauseates and turns the stomach sick. Probably, if scents have this power at all, it even affects the fancies of the brain. The whole open foreground reeks with it.

Not one of them can walk upright. Many are quite still and motionless. We will come to those later. But the others scuttle like crabs and with a clattering sound. It is the noise of their crutches. Not proper crutches, but short bludgeons, which they hold in their hands not more than a foot above the ground. For all are lopped and mutilated. They have but the stumps of legs. Some come forward, erect, swinging a pair of footless stumps before them. These are in a sitting posture, but their lopped legs dangle and do not touch the ground. In their gait there is something of the monkeys who swing from tree to tree. But these are flightless. They can but crawl.

Others have their stumps tied behind them, so that they advance kneeling, but upon wooden rests to which their shins are bound. Those scrape down quickly, from dragging, and have to be renewed, and they make a particular wooden sound which can be told apart from the clattering of the crutches. Then there are those who have had their legs lopped off at the knee, and their stumps tied down into a three-legged, wooden rest, shaped like a little milking stool. They can lift these off the ground with the muscles of their thighs, and it is most curious to see them on their crutches, hurrying forward upon those wooden prongs. Like dancers, they lift them nearly to their chins, and long use has made them agile as a crab. While they are in motion, none of them can do anything with their hands but hold their crutches, and this makes them like creatures of another creation. So long as they are moving they are helpless. In addition, they have their own stature, their own canon of proportion, reaching to no higher than the normal knee. There is something animal, too, some crustacean likeness in their turns and scuttlings. Never, never, are they in line, but always darting in and out among each other in an irregularity that proves their hostility among themselves and makes them like the cannibals of the dark sea bed.

Some, who may be lepers, wear a white cap like a dunce's cap, and a white linen shirt shaped like a surplice, but ending at the waist. On to this the brushes of foxes are sewn, front and back, to be a warning, for they are no less quick moving than their companions. Their extremities have suppurated and dropped off. Some are the heroes of old wars, while there are men who have fallen under cartwheels, have had their legs crushed, or been trapped in falling houses, or under trees. All such are amputation cases, and have the stumps of their legs at knee or thigh, according to the lopping. Others, who may lack a hand as well, have been

## Centipelle

mutilated by the hangman, but want has so pointed their faculties that although they must crawl they are more hard to catch. Gaol fever has wasted some limbs and withered them away, while there are a few, born armless or legless, or with rudimentary feet or hands that are helpless, like a flipper, or like the baby's hands of ectoplasm that are materialized at a séance.

The hereditary beggars have been mutilated by their parents, and perhaps the operation, if performed early, while the limbs are soft, is no worse than the dubbing of game cockerels. Those have their combs cut in order to prevent their fighting, while these have a foot or a hand cut off, which establishes them as beggars from birth with all the advantages accruing to that. They have all their childhood in which to learn the secrets of their profession, and are not thrown upon the roads after a battle or an accident. This, with what they have inherited of trickery and deceit makes them past masters. They are the aristocrats of their calling: they whine and beg, but do not toil. Most of them are married, in the sight of God, and have children who are destined to be beggars, too. The others may have their women whom they have gone back to after the wars or prisons, but it is not the same. Even the lepers have their leper wives.

All these are beggars of the wooden stump. They walk on crutches.

But there are those who can only crawl, and have come out of their walls into the middle of the square with as much difficulty as persons who cannot swim but are in the deep water. They are prostrate upon the dust, not lying flat, but twisted and contorted, some with a leg obtruding and pressed back along their bodies in the direction of their heads. It is as though a champion wrestler has tormented them by twisting back their limbs as they lay struggling, and leaving them helpless with dislocated joints. These were never set, but have grown into their unnatural position, and are now withered. There are some who look as though they have become fixed in the contortions of an epileptic fit.

All have their hands fastened with a leather band to a piece of wood which has wooden spikes, two or three inches long, like rudimentary fingers, or the points of a starfish. It is, in fact, a wooden claw. This is their only means of crawling forward. It would be too difficult to dig their fingers into the dust, and drag themselves along. By the help of this artificial hand, which is as insensitive as the spikes of an iron mace, they bite into the earth, and press the wooden teeth for long enough into the ground to pull their bodies after them, and put one claw in front again, and with subhuman force writhe and drag themselves behind it. Some have come so far out into the square that it would seem impossible they can get back to their walls. There is a particular and curious sound as they crawl forward, which could be the noise of a centipede magnified into infinity, and drumming along the dust and dirt. It is the clatter of the beggars' wooden fingers. Each hand has four or five wooden nails or spikes to it. Behind, with something of the serpent's movements, but of a snake that has been maimed and mutilated, comes the writhing and scuffling of their rags.

## *Bonnets of hareskin*

There are some who can just move their limbs, and they crawl along after the manner of a frog or toad who has suffered some fearful injury and is dragging itself into the shade to die. But, in general, they are paralysed. Their bodies are like dead trunks of trees. They are withered from the waist or shoulders down. In the attitude that they were spewed forth or spattered upon the earth, when they were born, they must eat, and sleep, and live. That is why we say they have come out of the wall. For they go back to it. They must creep into a hole among the stones. Not walled up, like monks and nuns caught in adultery, but we could see them glide, head first, and like snails that leave a track of slime, disappear into the shadows. It may be a shelter of a few rags propped upon sticks. Or a mere angle of the wall, but they crawl into it, and creep forth in the morning.

So many wooden spikes or fingers, for we do not know what name to call them by, make a pattern, splayed out upon the dust. There is some analogy between them and the appalling socks worn by the clowns in Spanish circuses, that have separate fingerstalls for each toe, and the humour consists in manipulating these as though they were some nightmare species of hairy crab, like the struggling, black crustaceans from Cadiz, that are eaten raw. Or they are blood-red, boiled, and eaten with pimentos, scarlet like the dragging entrails of the bull ring. Now look at the hats of the beggars. Some are fur bonnets, of catskin, slain among the stones. Of rabbits taken in traps. Of hareskin, for the hare can be caught and clubbed, although it runs every way it can in order to escape. Perhaps the hareskin bonnet is more appropriate and wilder than any other. It is more like a turban of hareskin, for it has been worn so long that it has lost any shape, but has grown to the head and face and is no different after a day spent in the rain, or when it is so hot that the snake comes out of the wall to sleep in the high meadowsweet among the broken sherds.

So much for those who crawl or writhe.

But there are some who cannot move at all. Their livelihood must depend upon stopping the passer by and keeping him for a moment, rooted to the ground. His attention must be rapt from him and fixed upon themselves. Upon their ground, or plot of dust, upon which they display their wares. Several of these, who are as motionless as Stylites upon their columns, are to be seen. In the manner of the stall keepers in oriental souks, the tendency is for all persons of a like trade to keep near together, not fearing competition. Sooner or later someone will stop in front of them. Therefore, they are in clusters of three or four beggars, together.

In every instance they have spread out a piece of cloth upon the ground before them. It is equivalent to the handkerchief in which peasant women bring their fruit and vegetables to market. But, as well, it is the sudarium, a wrapping or unrolled bandage, a square linen which, from long use, may hold the imprint of what was wrapped in it. Also, it is the muleta, the heartshaped scarlet cloth of serge or flannel with which the matador tires and confuses the bull, and gets its head down into position for the kill. The piece of cloth can be of any colour, white linen to hold up by its corners, and fold up, and make into a bandage. Or the black cloth in

## *The pseudopod*

which a bleeding head is wrapped and taken from the guillotine. In our own day it would be a sheet of newspaper, and in this present year, when humanity is suffering, it would not be too fanciful to call that a part of the shroud in which the body of the world is wrapped, for it carries the marks of our agony imprinted on it. A sheet of newspaper, then, stuck down upon the ground in front of them, and with a weight upon it, so that it cannot blow away. But it is better to be truthful, and admit that it is a crumpled piece of cloth or linen. And there are so many such, with a beggar huddled up beside them, that we could think we are in a market place where everyone is so poor that this is all there is to buy.

The first of these vendors has his pitch by the brick parapet of the little bridge. San Antonio Abad, therefore, has ridden past him. What we see upon the white square of cloth is a foot, shrivelled and paralysed, with only its rudimentary shape by which to know it. The beggar crouches against the wall in the attitude of someone who has fallen in a fit, who has hurled himself upon the ground, and the only contradiction to this is in the careful spreading of the napkin. It is put down as though pinned at the four corners. Someone must have brought him here in the early morning, when the first stalls are opened, and will have lifted that fearful limb an inch or two in order to get the cloth under it and prepare him for the day. Then this attendant, woman or hired person, will have left him, for it is a part of his stock in trade to be helpless and to set the almsgiver wondering how this twisted body can be moved from here. All day, too, he must fast, unless he is thrown a crust of bread, for it breaks one of the conventions of begging if he has brought any food with him.

Near by, there is another, and another beggar with a napkin. They are as important to the scene as white sails of fishing boats tacking in the wind. We could get the impression that these prostrate and writhing bodies, which in reality are paralysed and cannot move, are persons swimming, who push these life saving objects before them, and try, frenziedly, to keep touch with them. For a moment they are like those Chinese beggars, made in pottery, upon whose faces there is a rictus or fixed grin which haunts the mind with anything but careless laughter, for it is the oriental humour which is three parts cruelty and the misery or discomfiture of the victim. The attitude of their sprawling forms, in whichever direction we look, is comical by reason of their energy and frenzy. Everyone is trying to outplay his neighbour. But they can only move their hands and arms, while their facial expression is conditioned by the years and years during which they have kept to the particular role imposed upon them by mutilation or deformity. It is a small stage upon which to play. Just a square of linen, or a soiled piece of cloth.

Further on, there are some who have attained to the impassivity of the Indian fakir who sits beneath the banyan tree. They are those who lie on beds of spikes, who hang head downwards from a branch with a smouldering fire beneath them, who hold an arm erect in the air until it is fixed there, when the limb is atrophied and swollen to the size of a man's waist, and the fingernails of the clenched hand have grown through the

## *The severed foot*

lighter palm and come out through the black back of the hand These are, indeed, as extraordinary as that It is not all rascality These could be accounted as ascetics These are the acrobats who fly through the air without a wire to hold them up or a mattress underneath them They have cut themselves off If it fails they will be dashed upon the earth It is the last and final test of skill, and perhaps this is to be discerned in their convulsed and furious posturings

For it is as though we saw a hand upon a saucer, lying upon the ground

This thing is a foot, by itself, put down upon the napkin It must have been carried here in a cloth, and spilt or thrown forth as you would tumble out a bone that you were taking home, wrapped in newspaper, for your dog to eat, and that you were loth to touch For, in fact, this is the arch of the foot, and the ankle bone, and stumps or sockets of the five digits All dead and mummued as if stolen from Pharaoh's tomb

Not gnawed by the dogs, for it is a precious talisman, as jealously guarded as any perfumed glove thrown down in the morning and taken up, unchallenged, in the evening It is curious to see this dead thing lying but an inch or two from the living body, even though that be senseless and paralysed But it is living tissue The sap is in the tree Black waters of the Styx or Acheron flow between the live body and the dead extremity He could pick it up in his hand except that he cannot Perhaps a part of this drama may be because it is as though this is a return from the dead, and that he has come back with a proof of it The foot has been preserved in brine or pickle, having been bribed from the hangman, or robbed from a new dug grave But that does not matter It is unidentifiable There is not even a cheat in this His foot has been lopped from him, and he has brought back a dead foot Could it be done, this beggar would lie in the dust with his own skull bleaching beside him

And, sure enough, a little further on there is a hand upon a napkin Nothing, in the imagination, could surpass the static fury of these mutilated men They concentrate their thoughts upon this gruesome thing with the intensity of the clairvoyant who gazes into the crystal globe before him Their paralysed bodies are as though translated into malevolence and hatred, with the words just coming to their lips These are the stalls of those who sell dead feet and hands, and no one comes to buy The merchandize is spread out all day upon the ground, and a copper coin or two has been thrown down beside it But, at night, it will be tied up in a handkerchief and taken home

The scene turns into a living nightmare For, whichever way you look, and so horrible that you cannot pass them by, beggars are on crutches that creak and stump upon the dirt and horse droppings while there is the furious clutching of those who walk with wooden pattens, but upon their hands, and drag their bodies after them They have lost or trafficked away their birthright to stand, and have been turned into creeping worm or stinking serpent, but with human limbs that are no use, and with the head of homo sapiens beaten down and humiliated into the dust These crawl with a pair of wooden hands, dragging their deformity behind



TAPESTRY OF SAINT ANTHONY LEAVING HIS HOUSE TO  
BECOME A HERMIT  
After Hieronymus Bosch





## *The squid*

them, and we hear the clattering of their wooden clogs, their chioppines. Not upon high arched bridges where the auburn-haired courtesans cross down by the canal, and the black funeral boat flits, moth-like, under, but here, in this terrible place, along the livid dust. Some, who cannot leave their wall, leer like disgusting masks, carved and stuck there, with slobbering lips and protruding, idiot tongue.

Near, always near, are the beggars of the napkin. Since they cannot move at all, those are near, but never touching. Their evil miracle performs a little distance away. There is a blind beggar with a dog, and human intelligence has gone out of him and entered into the animal that leads him. With others, we must credit this transference into the staff they lean on, into their stump or bludgeon, or into those supplementary wooden hands which we indicated, by analogy, as being comparable to the teleplasmic hands, pseudopods or fifth limbs of ectoplasm, materialized by the mediums at a séance. As to those dead hands and feet which lie beside their living owners, the circumstances are different, and we are to imagine that these are another manifestation in the form of relics which are credited with working miracles, and that they are prayed to, all day long, in an illusion that they have power to melt the stony heart.

For sistrum there is the rattling of the begging bowl. Would it be fanciful to compare this, and the tapping and scuffling of so many wooden limbs, to the furious rapping in the panelling of some haunted room? Loud detonations, a discharge of lesser noises, two or three big blows as of a heavy stick at intervals of three or four seconds, and then a kind of sigh, clear and vibrant. What would that be but the dragging of a beggar's body along the dust, the thump thump thumping of his crutch or stump, and the snake-like sighing or hissing of his beggar's gown? His rags have, even, a peculiar texture, being rubbed or polished by his gliding. The rapping and tapping is so rapid and regular that it becomes like some electrical phenomena which could be investigated. This is just the effect of so many beggars at a glance. We are in midst of a race of beings who move at another level, horizontal and not vertical, who crawl over, and do not tread upon the earth, and who are so dependent upon stick or crutch that their bodies are grafted, as it were, upon those wooden stems or limbs. Without them, they can but lift up and fall flat upon the earth. Those who, by the nature of their infirmities are static and immobile, are forced to rely upon other and different forms of malevolence and horror. Their place is against the backcloth, but, like consummate actors, they outplay those who are hobbling and crawling into the front.

It could all be described as a senseless and horrible gesticulation, in a language that needs no words. But they live in a convention or policy of their own, with its peculiar rules, like those which govern the preying squids or polyps in their rock pools, or the laws among the families of rats. It is the civilization of the scavenger. This is their community, or common interest even when they mutilate their own children even when they fester their own sores. A howling, raging misery, that whines even in its sleep, when they crawl off to their holes. The cuttlefish

### *'Some casualties: a few of them fatal'*

swells and colours livid with his greed, he dances and blushes purple, as though the living thing he eats is his bride, his paramour, but these are emaciate, as though their bones were outside their skins. Their skin, in any case, sticks to the bone, with no flesh between. It is a hide or integument, a horny covering to which their rags cleave.

When we speak of bones that howl it is the actual truth. And there comes music from an ass's jawbone, for there are unburied skulls of animals. The place and the scene, are changing. But not the swarming beggars. We are in the Thebaid of St Anthony. But the desert is a wrecked town of fallen houses.

There are abandoned motors everywhere. Of what do they remind us? The black and twisted chassis lies, upside down, with its four wheels in the air. Near by, there is the bonnet of a car buried in the earth and broken from its body. There are sights like this in disused rooms, upon the windowpane and behind the shutters. The heads or bodies of flies, without their wings, mildewed and gone grey, enmeshed in the spider's winding sheet. The head is kidney shaped, but there is some curious resemblance between this and the radiator of a motor-car. It may be because we know that the cells of a fly's eye, immensely magnified, resemble the honeycomb pattern of a radiator, and that this is, so to speak, a piece of insect construction, for it resembles the wax cells in which the larvae, the grubs or maggots, fat and torpid, cloy their days on honey. There may be several of these kidney heads, with something horrible and nubile in their shape, for they resemble, too, the leather saddle of a bicycle. The bonnet of a motor car, half embedded, is the insect metamorphosed by the spider and laid out for dead. Close to it, wrenched from the socket, lies the contact line of a tram, and further on, the battered tram, itself, with nothing left of the passengers but a child's hand upon a wooden hoop, a torn dress, and an enormous smudge, a mass of bloody clothes. Maybe the tram was nearly empty. It has only just happened. The rescue squad has not yet come upon the scene.

It may fall at any time or place. Why not in the red brick town, not far from Bruges or Ghent? Then the pavé roads of Belgium will be full of refugees, choking the roads of Picardy, and making for the firefly South in the leafy month of June. That happened. But this is an old tapestry, and nothing more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This tapestry of the Temptation of St Anthony is in the former Royal Collection at Madrid. It was probably ordered from the Brussels looms by Philip II, who made a collection of Bosch's paintings, but while this first of the series is composed from his drawings, the other three panels are taken from well known paintings by his hand. Perhaps it is significant that this should be a tapestry with gold and silver and silk threads in it, for that is like an ironic comment upon the saint riding forth, through a regiment of beggars, to be an anchorite. This particular panel is a composition, made up by another hand, and must date from at least fifty years after the artist's death. Its sources are the sheets of beggars drawn by Bosch, set down from memory, or drawn after a day of cure or pilgrimage among the cripples. Instances of such drawings of beggars exist in several galleries and collections.

## 4. 'Carthage is Fallen'

The fearful winds subside a little It is the fourth day, or fourth year of the storm Soon to be the fifth It raged before that in more distant places This was the manner of its beginning In the afternoon loud reports were heard Many persons became alarmed and left for home, saving their lives thereby Towards evening the noises were repeated, and people stood about, not knowing whether to stay or go Just after dark, with a noise of thunder, the ice, or fire, fell rushing down, and all were engulfed

In the morning the living crawled out from their ruined houses The black loathsome glacier had devoured everything It could, as well, be molten lava Or dust and rubble, and twisted girders In that morning, at Belgrade, or Coventry, or Rotterdam, the living picked up the burnt out fuses and the bits of shrapnel and took them to their shattered homes A child's hand was protruding from the ashes For there is a pattern in disaster, whether the victims wear the lamb's fleece papàkha of the Caucasus, or the cloth cap and muffler of the factory worker They are crushed like flies, whether it be the fire of heaven or the ice of hell

We live in a time when all symbols must be of rushing winds which strike down, whether aimed on purpose, or at random We hear a loud and rushing wind, and the cries of terror of the multitude It is an earthly judgment from which only the little and inconspicuous will creep out The great statues are tumbled from their pedestals, or hidden in sacking until the storm is over And it can blow for years There may not be a figure left standing at the end of it Those that are uncovered on that spring morning will be forgotten The loved ones may have changed their shapes, mostly It is round them that the golden dust has gathered Others will disintegrate as they come up into the light Some may have a patna which has descended upon them in the darkness None will ever be the same again For they will be seen from a new set of values, so that, to this degree, the Day of Judgment is a present and living truth The storms and the furious winds are proof of it, when we substitute the mad world for those symbols of disaster

We must hope to keep certain memories alive, so that all is not different when the dust disperses and the winds die down Lesser things, that no one would bother to carry to a place of safety, that are so tenuous they cannot be destroyed, these will survive They may be lying, unhurt, among the ashes Much will have perished It will be gone as quickly as the newspaper of a day or night For the revaluing of all values has begun Many are false judgments It could not be otherwise There is so much ignorance and prejudice The pall of darkness that has come down hangs above the whole world In an entire hemisphere it is as though a blight of madness has stained the very walls There is not one stone upon another that the mind can think of without some shade of horror The

## *The Age of Lead*

bright mountains have been blotted out As for the dead, they are buried in a tainted land Great men, whose precious spirits were the possession of all humanity, have become rotting carcasses which the conquerors carry with them in their camps The greatness has run out from their bones They are dead bodies that the blackmailers leave in the appointed place when the ransom money has been handed over

And it is the same with countries as with persons The glorious temples have been sullied Blotches, such as starving children have upon their legs and arms, have come upon the pillars Only in our own eyes, or in our memories, but we believe they are contaminated and must be cleansed They could not be wholly inanimate and unaffected Or are the works of god-like hands mute and inscrutable as their masters? The ruins of the old world are ruins in the midst of slums The desert has not yet come up to them It will be a plain of rags and sherds The picture house will be roofless and the council houses but a heap of rubble That does not matter It is the breath of the great spirit that is tarnished The old gods must be abandoned, or be born again Our world is in the mood for miracles to happen But it grows late, the sands are running down

Living men and women are taken up by their hair and caught into the machinery they have installed There is no escape from the flying belts and wheels They fall into vats of boiling liquids, and are consumed The terrors of the ancient tortures are visited upon themselves Where will it stop? Not until all men and women have become slaves of war The breaking of the bonds will be done in blood and agony Their thongs will be burnt through and loosened but by fire They will drop limp from the halted engines Many factories will never work again We shall see men and women dressed in rags, and hungry children It will be the landscape of the Welsh mining valleys It takes so long to work a wonder in a starving land The cloth goes green with age It rains unceasingly and you never see the sun But they, at least, went hungry in the midst of plenty They were not starving in a starving world And thus will starve in mind and spirit as well as in the flesh It will have nothing to gnaw but old crusts and empty minds The wells will be poisoned The winds will darken with steel wings

We have come to the disintegration, to the scattering before the storm Our Three Witnesses, and everything that is insane and mad give forth their testimony They have foreseen it all It is of this their voices spoke to them They listened, while no one else would hear This fulfilment is their dread reward They have waited long for it It is for this they sat knitting in the scaffold's shade The Golden Age and Age of Gold are ranged for battle We hear the barking of the dog Cerberus And the cooing of the turtle dove Other birds are singing less passionate, of more solace than the nightingale But the chorus of their voices only cries 'Weep! Weep!'

All the imagery is of nothing but flight and disaster Or the creeping spectre of starvation, that crawls on hands and knees because it cannot walk In the starry night we think we hear the knocking, grating of its bones

## *Tied to the wheel*

What if it be a Thirty Years War and men and women are bound for their lifetime to the machine of War? Not upon the march, but to the treadmill, until each individual has had his soul die within him That can happen and nothing will prevent it It has happened, in the past, and nothing has prevented it It is impossible for them to burst their fetters, for, as long as the engines work, they have the warmth of that, and with the stopping of the wheels there will be nothing for them Therefore, it must continue and they must be chained to it One year there will be little to offer them but vinegar upon a sponge Others have grown fat upon high wages But our theme is not the herd, but the one person in ten thousand who feels lonely in it The others leave no more memory behind them than the huge graveyards of the dead They are forgotten, we could say, from the moment they are born There are no wings within them that are beating to be free They are content to have the chain upon them They were bred for that

But we would have a whole lifetime in an hour or two In our stratagem their years of suffering became shortened to a few hours or days of terror in the furious winds This, for purposes of literature And does not the tempest rage? Listen to it upon this winter night! The four winds of the world are shrieking Is it mad, or is it sane? We cannot tell until we know the purpose of it Or if there is no design at all, and it is fortuitous Such things can happen, as when the sea flows into the crater and a tropical island is blown out of the water <sup>1</sup> What powers could that please, except the demon of destruction! But there is the certainty that what must not happen becomes probable, for that reason only Every force is urging it, as though instinct led them to the precipice They walk backwards, blindfold, in that direction To prevent them would be to interrupt a joke before the point of it There are patterns, we must believe, of good and evil, with as much, or little meaning as conjunctions of the planets Such, or such, a person was born when a certain star was in the ascendant, and it may portend everything, or nothing In all probability it is nothing, but the clock pointed to a certain hour

What time is it, to-day? Has it struck the hour? We should not hear it, if the wind blew from another quarter Is this the crisis, or climacteric? Have we come to the watershed, to the dividing of the waters? Into what valley are we descending? Is it but a defile of unburied bones? Did they die of heat or cold? Did they die in battle? Or lost and starving, with their bags of gold beside them? Or a penny, kopeck, obol, of copper rusted green? Is it necessary to search among the rags, or lie down beside them? There is no heat in mere bones even though the marrow was melted out of them In the crowd, as in the wilderness, there are rumours, and there is the rushing wind By word of mouth, or in mystery as from a trembling of the sands By the panic in the poplar leaves, by the glitter of the ilex In the chiming of the waves, according to their scale of seven notes where the seventh wave is in major harmony and brings back the rhythm of the million years In fire, or water, divining by their changes

<sup>1</sup> Krakatoa.

## *Night after night*

But this rushing wind, these cries of terror come, like the whirlwind, from all ways at once And daily, hourly, they increase in strength What does it portend? Is it the first blast of the dreadful climax? No, not that, because it will be more tremendous still The nerves are not completely shattered It has not come yet to the worst The whole world is not yet on fire There are flames on all horizons Flames, but no other lights of work or pleasure All, who are not engulfed, look on in stupefaction

The noise of battle comes near, and nearer, to them Brands out of the burning fire fall into their midst They are ringed round with flame There is no escape for them It is the question of a moment, or an hour There is a smell of singeing, and intolerable heat Or cold For both burn alike It is but the difference of thirst or hunger If it contracts the mind and soul, if it stops the heart beating, what does it matter if it be ice or fire? Both are stultifying and destroy the spirit All the living are bound in servitude to death To that one fact from which there is no flight, whether sooner or later, but it all ends in that

And now, in this red sunset, there is the distant throbbing Listen! Listen! We all know what it means It is mankind's great invention Those are the chariots of fire in which the young go up into the heavens After a million years of crawling upon the earth, who would blame them for it? It would even be safe, if there were no war

But they are as wasps within a cage of wire That hornet-buzzing has only poison in its tail They are warriors not honey gatherers They die young It is the self-immolation of the drones They have not had time to think about it, but rush forward to be killed Out of their sacrifice the lesson must be learned But it is too late for them to profit by it And their successors are willing in that same night, or in the leaden dawn, when the sky is like a coffin lined with lead The sons of the morning fall down out of the clouds And are disintegrated broken to bits upon the earth It is as though the flame of a candle is burning in the night, and the winged beings fly into the fire There is no mercy for them It is their brave instinct, or their youth If there be a god he must surely warn them, and not mark them down to die Or be indifferent But there is no sign He does not favour either one or other And it has been so always The delusion of human beings has been that this is not so That he has been partial Or that their different gods have helped them In the light of this is history read Not yet, perhaps never, can the truth be written Or now the time has come, and it can be told in allegory

Those who are weighed upon the falling scales have seldom occasion to mount up again They lose everything, and their future is but of ghostly interest It is the sign of such fugitives that they bring nothing with them That they leave everything behind They rescue some object which has sentimental value, their palladium, or talisman, or sacred emblem All that is of value falls into enemy hands The Bourbon Kings left Naples taking with them twelve life-sized figures of the saints in wax Stalin would leave the Kremlin taking with him the body of Lenin with its painted lips Don Carlos, and his brother, come straight from the

## *The Hop-garden*

battlefield to Brown's Hotel, in Dover Street Still wearing the scarlet boina with its golden button, and the medals of the Carlist Wars

But the world may turn until lost causes become the winning ones, when humanity has had a surfeit of its future and prefers present happiness in the shadow of its past There could be order, in nature, from the yellow aconite to the yellowing of the chestnut leaf No one need starve But not in our time For the winds blow at hurricane The whole world is burning, burning It can be the whole world dying And so it can be the end of his or her own youth for every person who reads this with all said that can be said, and nothing to come after it

Upon this still evening, while they are ploughing, that red glare, low in the sky, is the light of Mars Cities are falling There is weeping in the plains Winter comes up out of the cold earth, which is soaked with blood

The bombs have fallen upon the peasants' villages On the many-fluted fustanella, upon the dervishes in high, white felt, steeple crowned hats, with green shawls round them, upon the black and crimson of the long-haired, glittering Ghegs, upon the women clad in pink and white capotes, with masked faces, canary yellow boots, of soft leather, and rose coloured tassels, under the plane trees, under the white stemmed abele trees, their boughs loaded with wild vines that festoon into the water Not in that one country only but in every other land as well <sup>1</sup> Thessaly Arcadia down to Crete and snowy Ida

We hear voices of little children crying under the birch trees A motorized column has been through the village and left it far behind They have thrown incendiaries into the wooden houses Some were time bombs which did not explode until days later Many men and women were locked in the church, and that was set on fire All, who could, have fled into the forest The pastoral days, and days of milk are done

At one time you might have heard syrinx and cornemuse in the blue air of the mountains

It was early in the morning The shepherd, in worked smock and round black hat, led his flock slowly through the village He was six feet tall, and his crook shone like silver That was in the land of cheeses We could have, too, picnics and hot nights among the hop-gardens Of sorts, the White Canterbury and Golden Hop, the Smooth Red or Rough Red Bind, with other names that are Cockney in accent as the streets of Lambeth Golden Tips, Pretty Wills, Rufflers, Fuggles, Apple Puddings Tools are the Plough, the Kerf, the Spade, Hop Knife, and iron Crow, and all are encamped among the Hop-poles

Or should we look for peace among the people of the hooks and eyes, who grow their own sorts of apples, Rambos, Smokehouse, Winesaps, Tulpehockens, who wear broadbrimmed hats or plain black bonnets, and live in their red brick farmhouses with green shutters and snow white

<sup>1</sup> My description of Epirus, which was so much devastated in the Greco-Italian campaign, is taken from *Travels of a Landscape Painter in Albania* by Edward Lear, 1851 He describes the costumes of Tepelini and Argyrocastro



## *Sardaña*

pauit, near to their Holstein barns All Anabaptists, Mennonites, followers of Menno Simon, Schwenkfelders, Dunkers or Dunkards, Hutterites, the House Amish (Old order) and the Church Amish (New order) They came from the Dutch polders, from the farmhouses of Saxony, Silesia, or Switzerland, lands where the clock ticks, where dahlia and zinna flower in the windowbox, and not an hour is wasted, unless it be in prayer They crossed the seas, and came to Pennsylvania, sailing down the Susquehannah Such fanatics as Johann Conrad Beissel founded the Society of the Solitary, for both sexes, at the Cloisters of Ephrata along Cocalico Creek What Puritan music in the name!

In another land music imitates the cries of birds and the sound of falling fruit The King, who is a god, passes under the great golden sunshades, in midst of his Amazons arrayed in green and gold and gleaming armour There are deer-drawn chariots and sacred elephants The whole earth smells of sandalwood and frangipanni Carved monsters guard the temples, there are mosaics formed of bits of murror, and a great barge like a gilded dragon with many rowers, to dispute the lotos Lost, al llost

Or here are the sardañas of Palafrugell Hoarse and hairy music of the bagpipe and the goatskin drum Or it can be the sardañas of Perelada We speak of music written by the Catalan, Morera There is nothing like it anywhere in the world Here is the Alborada Of reddish soil, where grows the carob tree The cathedral has a cloister where sacred geese are kept Do we not hear them in the cackling of the Alborada? For it is a pastoral of the farmyard Upon a dewy morning And, suddenly, there is dark wine in the music They do not touch the glass with their lips, but drink at arm's-length from the round-bellied porron In the sardaña, itself, there are these sudden climaxes, and it begins with a statement like a fanfare Then the music quickens, and they dance under the trees It can be, almost, the farandole of Navarre, in sight of the Pyrenees But the furious climax comes again, different from other music, for it is upon other instruments And the ox horn and the goatskin drum are still There are sardañas, all night long, under the walls, along the promenade, the rambla or the alameda, but not like the rest of Spain For this is Catalonia, and the music and the air are Catalan

Here are country paths of the Gallegos, both paths and walls of paving stone Of dark stone, almost of black shale, but like a monolith sliced thin We see the stones shining after a shower of rain Granaries of peculiar type stand upon stone pillars This is an autumn land of pears It is so humid that cloaks of straw thatch are worn All things are rustic and not pastoral It is because distances are small and the Atlantic is on two sides There is much to remind one of St Thegonnec and Gumihaui in Finistère But steel wings throw their shadows on those heaths and windy spaces There they nest their eggs, and roar up into the grey Atlantic clouds So that, of the two extreme lands, that of the scallop shell is the more expedit

Yet we return, and are in a little town, where the day begins as though the shops were open early Peaches and cherries are displayed, on cotton



TWO NORMAN PLASANT HEADDRESSES  
by Charles Stothard



## La belle France

wool, in wooden boxes Melons are carried in from a hand barrow Here are soft cheeses, Brie or Camembert, upon straw mats, and jugs of cream A woman comes past carrying a roll of bread, three feet long, under her arm Other peasant women are struggling with live ducks or chickens All these figures are dressed in grey or black, but with starched and elaborate white caps But the youngest of them, married or unmarried girls, the belles Sablaises, have short skirts to just below their knees, wooden sabots which clack-clack gaily upon the wooden pavé, and a particular and charming headdress called the papillon They are, in fact, fishergirls from the sand dunes of les Sables d'Olonne

Away to the North, in the peninsula of rocks, the countrymen wear dresses of goatskin, with the fur outside, and long sleeves Their long shaggy hair hangs dishevelled, down their backs, so that they look not unlike Robinson Crusoe in old duodecimo engravings They have the slouch hat, and the brague bras or trunk hose of the time of James I or Charles I, and wooden sabots stuffed with straw The black charcoal burners come, thus attired, out of their boar-haunted forests to the fair of Faou

Here are little towns of overhanging houses, each storey, with an apron of slates, more nearly approaching its neighbour until the inmates could shake hands from the garrets Walking here in the evening, facing away from the little harbour, you may see a face at a window, framed in a mediaeval headdress There are many sorts, from all the different villages Generally, it is a cap of white linen set tight to the head, and covered with another cap that serves the purpose of a bonnet The outer cap may be of muslin, rising high above the head, with two several borders which are neatly plaited These borders, at least a foot in width, are stiffly starched, and turn upwards and outwards from either side of the head The headdress can be of another shape, more like a slouched turban, or it may take a form which is more fanciful still, immensely high and oblong, of white linen, ruched and starched, which rises from the forehead in triple tiers, fitting in their turn into a white linen superstructure, which is shaped like a woman's stays, out of the empty bust of which the crown emerges, like the ruffling of a linen shirt, and falls in a pair of trailers until they touch upon her shoulders

Perhaps the fanciful ingenuity of the mediaeval mind has been nowhere more exercised than in the invention of these peasant headdresses of Normandy and Brittany<sup>1</sup> Their genius consists in folding It is the hand that can fold a sheet of paper into different objects Here, it has been at work upon white linen How their ideas took shape and grew, at what moment they were fixed and irrevocable and the design was settled, this is not less mysterious than the divagation of plumage among the birds Where so many different forms are concerned, this could be called, in parenthesis, the origin of species, and their development may follow upon the same breaks and changes, in obedience to identical laws of

<sup>1</sup> These headdresses are to be studied, particularly, in *Costumes du Pays de Caux*, by Lanté, 1831

## Conquest of Tunis

necessity or chance But, of course, the art is female The hand of man has had no share in it

At this point we would raise up one more hallucination, and have a great fleet slowly coming in to shore, smokeless, with no smudge of smoke across the clear horizon, and only the steam of the kitchen galley rising from each ship That, and a distant noise that no one living has ever heard, of an entire fleet trimming sail The huge vessels, for long moments together, appear not to move, as though their function is but to float, and not manoeuvre in the winds They are all in line, creeping like beetles over the skin or surface of the waters

But the true hallucination comes many hours later, when the army has landed and is drawn up along the plain We would have it that the galleons are invisible, hidden behind a headland, so that this phantom army is first seen in a cloud of dust with inexplicable movements and glitterings in its midst What can it be? And there is a leaden and hollow hammering, something between a shuffling and a heavy tread, that shakes along the dunes

In the heart of the dust there appear different squares or segments, quite motionless, another mystery unknown to our time, but remembered from Callot's *Miseries of War*, for the regiments have above them many long, thin filaments, no thicker than that from far away, like a capillary fringe, or the innumerable legs or bristles of some gigantic caterpillar, all of the same length exactly, and that slant of a sudden as the pikemen slope their lances No one living has ever seen this thing, but for many thousand years it was the first phenomenon of battle The approach of the army, for the infantry cannot be seen to march, takes place, stage after stage, when the lances loom up longer and more menacing out of the haze of dust Pennons and banners now appear They have come up near enough to parley And the army halts

Among the ghosts of old battles few could be more curious than this If we consider only its scene, the plain of Carthage, which, notoriously, had been sown with salt Even now, with villas and electric trains, the plain is haunted ground We hear the trumpets and clarions sounding the alarm What we are witnessing is the Conquest of Tunis by Carlos Quinto (Charles V) in 1535 But what we see is not the battle, but the set of tapestries of the Conquest of Tunis Our own delight in these tapestries is that they are so little known that they remain almost, as the private possession of those few persons who are interested in them <sup>1</sup> They are stowed away in the Royal Palace at Madrid Another set are in the

<sup>1</sup> These tapestries, woven upon the looms of William van Pannemaker in Brussels, were intended by Charles V to be a permanent relic of his reign They were executed at immense cost, by eighty workmen, with gold thread from Milan, and silk from the royal factories at Granada It is curious to think that these tapestries of the Conquest of Tunis, before being sent to Spain, were exhibited in London, at the time of the marriage of Philip II of Spain to Mary Tudor, in 1554

## *Amphibious operations*

Imperial Austrian collection Both, practically, are therefore inaccessible But they are among the wonders of the Renaissance They were designed by Juan de Mayo. He was a draughtsman and military engineer, a Dutchman, Jean Vermayen, or Van Mayen, who accompanied Charles V upon his campaigns, called, also, by the Spaniards, Juan Barbudo or Barbalongo, because his beard was so long that he could tread upon it

There are twelve tapestries in the set A map of the whole Mediterranean with the ports of embarkation, a review of the army, near Barcelona, before they went on board, arrival of the fleet upon the site of ancient Carthage and disembarkation, battle at La Goletta, a Turkish sortie, the Turks repulsed and driven back, capture of La Goletta, the advance upon Tunis, capture of the town, the sack of Tunis, return of the army to Rada, and re-embarkation All the tapestries have long and curious sentences or captions, woven in Spanish in the top border, and in Latin underneath, and these make it more than ever like an epic poem The first of these tapestries would remind us of the Geographical Gallery in the Vatican, painted with maps of the earth and seas under the direction of a Dominican friar, Ignazio Danti, with a high proportion of powdered lapislazuli in the fresco There are the same galleons, the same emblems of the winds and seas Juan de Mayo appears, in person, in this tapestry, with his famous beard The ports of embarkation from Europe are displayed, and the field of operations in Northern Africa Great fleets are assembling The winds are propitious Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, guard the seas We can only wish that Juan de Mayo had sailed with Cortez or Pizarro

But, in the next tapestry, the army is reviewed upon Spanish soil, and, already, there is something curious in the composition These are some of the largest and finest tapestries ever woven, in technique and execution, but they are different in style from other masterpieces of the age from the Hunts of Maximilian, or the Battle of Pavia Not academic, but following the mannerisms of Juan de Mayo, the military engineer And it is soon apparent that he was no amateur, but a draughtsman of peculiar merit An eyewitness of the campaign, who, we could say, writes of it in his particular and personal style, as personal, thinking again of Cortez, as the prose of Bernal Diaz who wrote the history of that expedition And, in fact, Jean Vermayen or Juan de Mayo had studied in Italy, and was fully aware of the curious influences then prevalent in Italian painting

We seem to find an echo in these tapestries of the Wars of Troy, as painted in fresco by Giulio Romano in the Sala di Troia of the Ducal Palace at Mantua It would appear that Juan de Mayo treated the conquest of Tunis as an episode from the Trojan Wars But there is another explanation This lies in the fact that Giulio Romano was, himself, a tapestry designer and had drawn the cartoons for a set of the History of Scipio in twenty-two hangings They portray the deeds and triumphs of Scipio Africanus and were inspired by Petrarch's *Africa*, an epic poem treating of the Second Punic War Such subjects as 'Victory points out to Scipio the way to glory', 'the continuance of Scipio', 'The Duel of Corbis

## *Caesar in armour*

and Orsua', 'Mandonius and Indibiles unite against the Romans', 'Generosity of Scipio towards Spanish prisoners', 'The Circus', 'The Portico', 'The prisoner Syphax', will show the poetic or epical background and the curious scenes and characters involved. Such large compositions, crowded with the warriors of two armies, and with great fleets of galleons, at anchor, or in full sail, have had to be organized in the smallest detail. There is a sudden drop in perspective from the figures in the foreground to those but an inch or two away from them, which heightens the heroic stature of the leading actors. The armoured captains, of both sides, have for accessory a page who holds their shield or helmet, or their horse's head. But, in fact, the horse's heads are protected with metal chamfrons, their manes with crinets, the flanchard covers up their flanks, and they wear the croupière upon their tails. These are relics of the age of chivalry, part of the poetical machinery of Petrarch's forgotten epic, adding confusion to the perspective of the tapestry.

To the minds of Juan de Mayo and his contemporaries the Capture of Tunis under Charles V was a crusade or a Homeric deed, in Roman costume, under the person of a Holy Roman Emperor. The tent of the Habsburg is fringed and corded as the pavilion of Pompey. The project for this set of tapestries had been undertaken, unlike most mythologies, by an artist who had, himself, witnessed these scenes, and was adept, as well, in the military science of the time. The designs, therefore, cannot have appeared in the least ridiculous to those who criticized and commissioned them. In the deeds of an exalted personage, a Holy Roman Emperor, some exaggeration was called for and allowed. Charles V was often portrayed as a Roman Emperor in his statues. In the field he may have worn something equivalent to a Roman warrior's costume. For a historic parallel possessed the minds of his Spanish and Teutonic captains. 'They were a Roman army, while the Turks were not so very different from the Carthaginians. Probably, if they had any regrets, it was that the Turks employed no elephants, for all had read of those in the wars of Hannibal.

The details of the drawing are incredible in their distortion. It is the beginnings of an academism which was never realized, and that could have contradicted all the later trend of painting. A curious current, an inflection, or a mannerism. In the drawing of the Turkish galley slaves it is displayed, in full. Their shaved heads could not be more calculated to show the contorted drawing of their neck and arms. It can only have been owing to the friendly terms of his relationship with Charles V, who in a gay mood would trample upon his beard, that Juan de Mayo, Barbalongo, contrived to have all the infinite resources and gradations of the most famous tapestry looms of Brussels at his disposal to carry out his curious designs. In no other circumstances could they have been passed and put into execution. They are the most personal, therefore, of all sets of tapestries. In the style of Chirico, if we would seek a modern parallel, but not so dead. Phantom armies, mock gladiators, on a glittering shore. We behold them, and wonder who they are!

## *Don Carlos*

It is a vision of despair when the whole world is burning, burning. Could we but see all twelve tapestries together we could lose ourselves for a few moments in that forgotten epic. Its involved machinery might seem like madness, an ancient madness which is but fiction or imagination, did we not know that it was true, and happened. Carlos Quinto, the Habsburg, could be Don Carlos, in Dover Street, on a summer morning seventy years ago. I saw him, myself, in Venice, in 1907. Not in the scarlet boina but in a black sombrero. In his private gondola, with a negro page, and gondoliers in Spanish liveries of scarlet and gold, gliding to the water stair of the Palazzo Loredan.

Here, then, we hear the cry of 'Carthage is fallen!' In Spanish or in Latin. Cries of yielding persons, arrows shot to and fro in the air, spirits in battle, two suns, a heaven of blood.



## Book Three

### THE BIRTH OF ANTI-CHRIST

**I**n what manner of a house was Anti-Christ born? In a peasant's cabin; in a cavern built up at the mouth, by firelight, by rushlight, by the flaming wick, or by the butter lamp?

Lying on a bed of straw, upon green boughs, or upon linen, in a room which had a hooded fireplace? When the deadly nightshade was in flower? In the month of the crocus? Or when the giant hemlock shook and rattled in the wind? While the toadstool thrust up and had ripened by the rainy morning? In the month of weeds? While the woods smelt damp and hoarse?

There were other women. A midwife, who, also, washed the dead and laid them out for burial. Or for the fire. For death is a perpetual fair of bones or ashes. But what is cooking in that room? What broth, or aliment? For the mother must have food to feed her babe. The adder has broken the soft shell and pukes with infant fangs for flesh and water. The eagle has come forth from the egg.

Were there no signs upon his body? He was born in blood, as all men and women. In a cheap lodging house, as the vixen might bear her litter in a rabbit warren. Near to the red brick synagogue. Or in a castle, for that has happened, close to the lotos pool. He will not be born, every time, in the slums. His father could have flocks and herds. His father could have forests of the cedar and the peony. Or a counting house with sacks of grain. And be of the blue-gowned Sephardim, with auburn beard, such as we imagine Nostradamus to have been.

Oh! the cloister of the pearl red pillars! The delights of cinnamon and saffron in the tasselled shade. There was peace, then, for a thousand years of dancing and of contemplation. The race of men wore snow white cottons. This was by the sacred rivers. In that plenty the great of spirit had to starve, as in the ruin of old Egypt when the desert of natron held the anchorites. When a satyr's footprint was where Dives passed, who had walked beneath the porticos, along the colonnades giving upon the ocean. The plain of Thebes was, once, one golden wheat-field up to the walls. Children sang with their mothers and counted the high towers. It is not there that he was born.

In a railway siding? By hills of clinker, where the wild flax grows? Where the engines pant and groan? Not there, nor in the haunted farmhouse where the jargonelle pear has fruited, where the old lies close up to the new, near to bottles and paper bags thrown out of the train windows. In a gabled house that is musty like a ratskeller, where the model of a ship hangs from the ceiling? In the brick towns of the Baltic? That is more likely. Under the linden trees, where lodged the giant grenadier? He had powdered hair: he was rubbed with pipeclay, and had fierce

## *The sect of Wanderers*

moustachios The shadow of his half-sugarloaf cap, or mitre, loomed upon the frosty window We hear the crowing trumpet, far and near There will be dunghill battles on the Pomeranian plain

Or we should find him in a long gown in the birch forests<sup>2</sup> Among the two hundred sorts of fanatics described by Archbishop Dmitri of Rostov Most wild of all, the Stranniki, or wanderers, who were homeless<sup>1</sup> More particularly, they had to die out in the open air They were perpetually fleeing from the wrath to come It was somewhat in this frenzy that Tolstoy died, running out of his house into the snow Fleeing, in that parallel, not from the Day of Judgment, but from the whole picture of his days Some of the Stranniki were seen by a traveller, late in the last century, waiting outside the railway station of a small town in the Caucasus, towards Armenia They had been exiled to this remote place, and he describes their restless movements, never standing still, their long hair and ragged gowns, for they never slept beneath a roof and never at the same spot, their appearance of a race apart, and their anxiety for news, as though, at any moment, the first rumours would come down of disaster They were the furies of denial and repentance, and their excesses of negation were of a drama that was the more compelling because of the monotony of the scenes in which they dwelt Indeed, inspired by that, or the direct result of it

We have the whole world, and heaven and hell, to choose from

But Anti-Christ will have been born upon Midsummer Night And in a land, we might imagine, of nearly equal night and day Of not much difference in the seasons, but with sudden thunder in the mountains Lightning is like the stripes of light upon the tiger It leaps out of the brakes, or, with no warning, into the great open fields of starlight Where it couches, or lies panting The tiger is his sign, not the cold clear stars of frosty nights Not the New Year, but the middle, or autumn, of the old Not evil, necessarily But the opposing principle, and, therefore, held in hatred by its opponents It is the philosophy of the antipodes, where the shadows are thrown backwards Often with the shame of the apostate, or the renegade In the cape and peaked hat of the necromancer To be hurled, like snake or rat, into the fire, for that would be his fate

But this is the master of the lightning He does not hide within the wall He will not be caught coming out between the stones He does not crawl out to lie in the sun He has not had a winter of long sleep Was he born, like King Pyrrhus, with the teeth already showing in his gums? It would be easy to know him, were there but signs upon his body But he has come, at random, like the sudden lightning No one has told in whose family he will be born We might search, high and low, at all times and places, and not find him Where the dog star whines, where the ilex glitters, where the flames cluck like so many cocks and hens, where the ewe's milk is blue as rain, where the mirror, in the locked room, turns upon the wall, where the babe, in the eighth month, has cried out inside its mother's womb? Such are lesser wonders, but pointing in one way

<sup>1</sup> Rasputin belonged to the sect of Stranniki

## *Procession of the Magi*

Perhaps it came, in harmony of smoothness, while the lute was playing  
Looking to the blue lotos pool Of other names of lutes and lilies. Of the  
caste of Brahmins But the wolf, or fox, must howl by night If the raven  
hops not in their woods, there must be vultures Carrion birds in place of  
nightingales The waves must bark, and not sigh, upon their lake shores  
They have hermits, but their bell rope is the stem of a wild vine

Or their cells are in the shaded banyan tree Of weeping buttresses,  
tree stalactites The long haired ascetics live for a hundred years and  
become enlightened Those are the holy places It is from here the sys-  
tems spring Those which grow like sap and have not fought with fire  
and sword The pale skinned Indian, not of the tropics, but of the Hima-  
layan vale There is none such mountain air It rarefies the spirit But 'it  
is not enough This is not the philosophy of calm Nor of the leaden dol-  
drums between the lightning It is lightning, itself, the incarnate tiger  
The descent of the ball of fire Not the marsh gases, but the meteorite, of  
metal from another world It can fall in waste places, but, impelled by  
some curious affinity, or merely by chance, as in every manifestation out  
of the heavens, it will seek a human dwelling and come down the clum-  
ney In association, therefore, with the kitchen or the bedroom, with the  
primitive symbols of human habitation As though in curiosity, or seeking  
information Or through clumsiness? We do not know They are the  
antics of the fireball or the freaks of genius In the belly of the peasant  
woman, who may have idiot brothers and sisters and a drunken father  
In a slum, from parents who should have had no children After the  
death of the father, and when no hope is left Or the mother dies, like the  
flame of the candle when a match is lit The hovel, wherever it be, is lit  
with flame at night And there is daylight in the morning Damp may  
come up out of the stones like a footprint There need be no birthmark

In the procession there are odd figures There is a furious galloping of  
messengers flying as if they had been shot and were escaping from another  
shaft, for an arrow protrudes from the back of their collars, as though it  
has been fired into them, obliquely, at a slanting angle Trains of servants  
utter their peculiar cries, sounding G in unison, then raising their note and  
singing C three times, afterwards, with a falling cadence, singing G again

Men, fifteen in a row, carrying poles with a number of steel rings  
strung loosely upon them, toss their poles into the air, allowing them to  
fall against each with a metallic clink, shrill and strident And the corps  
of tiger-hunters comes past, in their coarse black felt hats with conical  
crowns and dark blue cloaks, trailing their long matchlocks It is the pro-  
cession of the Kur-Dong These are the Magi, in the true meaning of  
that word, for it is the retinue of a magician King.

All the officers, or nobles, wear the peaked hat of the necromancer  
Crinoline hats of black horsehair, with projecting wings. They carry a  
singular frame of stones, and in a litter, a great stone which in remote  
antiquity was an instrument of music But it is only an interlude An act  
of homage. And those notes of stone and metal die down against the

## *Homo sapiens*

leaden sky The men with arrows in their coats gallop frantically away. And there are flashes of wild lightning <sup>1</sup>

Who are the nurses? Discreet beldames, mistresses of dissimulation, who have saved their blood to give, in drops, to their familiars, to toad or weasel, as you would take a drop of camphor on a lump of sugar And then the familiar goes back again into its hiding place Personages of legend, or like the statues from old tombs, who, nevertheless, in their time would have been consumed at the stake, or in the burning furze which was a slower fire Now it is their heyday, the golden reign of Saturn while they rock the cradle For the child was born under Saturn and his rings

The legend of the Magi is proved in the lamaserie For they send forth to search for reincarnation in a newborn babe, and know him by certain signs They come with rich presents, and take the child away with them to a whitewashed monastery which may have a crimson upper storey and a golden roof The peaked cowl and the mitre will be his infant clothes The long trumpets will echo in the mountains But, here, the garden terms or caryatids are carved with sardonic or saturnine expressions It is this in place of resignation or abstraction These do not long to be annihilated utterly and left in peace It is the kingdom of this world or the Age of Gold The youth of Anti-Christ could be as the education of Pantagruel Madness has not yet come upon the earth It proceeds with great gales of laughter sounding from the fountains and the steeples There are banquets of the gods Picnics with Priapus for host, where figs and grapes are laid upon the lawns Moonlit suppers underneath the plane trees

But such are adult pleasures After the giving of presents the babe must lie in with his mother That was but a symbol or a fiction, and his home may be a hired room in a lodging house With a photograph in a cheap frame upon the mantelpiece, or a coloured print of King or Emperor or President, from a time before the different lands plunged into the deluge There was not long to wait All day and night the trams ran with their clanging bells, and tinned food was another of the inventions There were night shifts in the factories and mines There were a million backyards with their outdoor closets, and no gardens There were allotments behind the gasworks There were pawnshops and fried fish stalls There was romance when the train came past, on the way from one town to another town There were sunsets reflected in the canal There were the wedding and the passing funeral

This was what the world had come to while it still produced great men There were brand new churches and tin chapels The tobacconist stood at the corner, and stocked the tribute of the Indies Meat came from New Zealand and the Argentine This was the master race, or one of them There were child murders and many incests Sunday was the whole day spent in prison, and Monday till Saturday was working time There were visits from the pedlar and the hurdygurdy man And there

<sup>1</sup> The procession of the Kur-Dong, in Seoul, is described by one of the last persons to witness it, in *Korea and her Neighbours*, by Mrs Bishop (Isabella L. Bird), London, John Murray, 1898, vol I, pp 47-58

## *'Let's go to the cemetery!'*

were the joys of drink and venery, though the latter was as though blindfolded, or always in the dark, so that the partner was never seen, in provision of mercy, since age and custom stale

This was where the wolf fed from the gutter Licking the garbage, and mistaken for a dog

Where are all the dead? How is it that the cemeteries can hold them? They are boxed and corded in those luggage yards They are lost souls, or the whole fog should be thick with wings But the soul that has survived is as rare as the bat that flits above the polished granite How many dead died in London in the hundred years? How many persons, all in all? Enough to choke the seas? Some were buried in their best clothes, but, most, in their white winding sheets The noble human animal lies in his millions in walled cities, near to the weeping willow Upon the slope of a hill, more often, for the view down to the roofs and chimneys of the living

There are dead, among them, who were laid out upon the kitchen table Where the coffin, during dinner, was lifted down and stowed between the table legs Living persons, children, more especially, must eat If you can be born in a kitchen, why not die in it? Because there are too many persons sleeping in the beds, up and down, and across them, or taking it in turns Because there is not space upon the stairs Because there are no pennies for the gas meter

What shall we drop into the coffin at the last moment? A handful of groundsel, asphodel of our frowsy meadows? Growing on the railway embankment, and right up to the hoardings No, it must be more intimate Asphodel is the formal flower of death Put in a paper windmill, bought at the seaside, to bring the gentle winds of summer A spade and pail, for castles on the sand These for a child

For older persons, a string bag for shopping in the markets of the dead To carry home offal from the butcher's stalls All have their favourite dishes We must remember these There is no wine for oblations There is a cracking teapot But there are other things Carpet slippers that were so comforting Belts and trusses and old spectacles A ring that will stay for ever upon the bony finger A heartshaped locket, with a photograph of what is, now, another skeleton inside it Locks of hair, of course A rose of gauze and paper, that will be everlasting Chrysanthemums, if it is winter, for persons have their favourite flowers, too Their sorrows are all wrapped up with them and put away, with a lead or zinc lining lest they should run out and stain the earth That is where dog-grass grows among the tombstones

You could lay a book of poems between her cheek and hair This for a young girl, at the age when people read such things But not in the slum tenements There are the middle aged dead, dying at the turn of life, in the climacteric At the psychic change They loved or were loved or thought they were We could bury them with a false document purporting this Someone must kiss their forehead before the lid is nailed down It is wise of the poor to make a feast of death It is, even, something of a love feast A mystic marriage, where the real marriage was but fleshly

## *Gardens of remembrance*

and material There are the clothes of the dead person to be divided The mirror will have a new image looking in it The mattress will have a new imprint on it, and will lose the old The cup will bear the marks of other lips

A pair of gloves, a pair of stockings, something that will make them feel at home, a shawl, a pillow, a petticoat, a flannel dressing gown, this is what we place in the coffin, instead of the coin, the obol put underneath the tongue It is to pay Charon He will not rob the dead A few, who were suicides, will show him the Sybil's golden bough, given into their hands for passport over the Styx They were buried at crossroads, or in unconsecrated ground The slum murderers are consumed in quicklime in the prison precincts All these are wandering for a hundred years upon the shores of Acheron They had no proper funeral What will befall the usurer, the poisoner, the abortionist? Will death know any difference? Will he tell the hero from the funeral mute, who, also, must die, one day, and be buried according to the rules Sutlers of the dead, in black clothes and hats and boots, the footmen of the pageant, hired by those who have no other servitor Certain things, birth or death or illness, cannot be done alone They must have the help of other hands

There can be burial clubs, which is like subscribing to the symposium The wreaths of laurel are stored ready for their wearers But cut from the shrubbery or public garden, not from the immortal groves of laurel and of myrtle It is a cheap insurance, a tabernacle, a provident society Their banquet music is the whining concertina Or the accordion The ballad singer shuffles, and never lifts his feet, along the pavement, looking up into the windows Pennies and halfpennies are thrown down to the lute player The blind man taps along with his walking stick The lamplighter hurries past with his long pole A hand lights the gas in the bedroom and the parlour It is another immortal night, under Hecate, who reigned as well in hell

The wolf could come down to forage in the gutters A lean and hungry wolf, perhaps half dog The bastard or half-breed of the race with furtive eye and tail that touched the mud In human shape he starved in the cheap lodging house, and took his meals, standing, at a coffee stall Like the dancers in a dancing marathon who have to eat, standing, and must move their feet, or they are disqualified And, dog-like, no meal lasts more than a moment He lifts the mug, and munches, and moves on He may stand in the queue, for hours, with the other unemployed Upon wet mornings when it will rain all day, except that the labour exchange is modern in invention, and that the register of the unemployed must come to a climax when the lists are closed Bread will be given round instead of money, for money will have lost its value That has not happened yet It will belong to the mid years of the Age of Lead

Such is the soil It is stamped down with coal and with ends of bricks Nothing can sprout from it but weeds between the crevices Here is the dandelion, like a golden clock in a back bedroom More often, it is blown into a mane of mist

No living being believes in anything at all It has come to that Mims-

## *'Pity the poor black man!'*

ters of religion could be witch doctors, for the good they do. They are an anachronism, a survival of superstition. Medicine belonged, once, to that category, but it has become an exact science. The soul and spirit still remain. But they are not to be treated like the brain. The lion and the serpent can be charmed with music. The sorcerers have forgotten their old arts. It is too late, perhaps, to learn them.

Nothing spiritual is left in daily life. By comparison with ourselves the black men of Australia are like the Muses crowned with flowers, and, in their animal wisdom, when an aeroplane passes overhead they are uninterested and do not even look up into the sky. They have the dance and drama. Their world has its shadows and its inner meanings that are expressed in symbols, unlike the modern mythology which is fed from films and radio and from the daily press. To that, nothing of creation goes. It is all reception. The audience is passive and not participant. It is an artificial feeding, not an appetite, but a process like a fattening which does not fatten. Instead, it distends, and has brought on disease and death. None can escape. They are dragged in by weight of numbers. It is their birthright that they have lost. They have not sold it, but they have paid their pennies to be cheated of it. They are accomplices, from ignorance and not from guile. How, and when, is it to be restored to them? Must they not die down utterly, and be reborn? Who is there who will frame the laws and begin creation? But, before this can happen, the cauldron must boil over. It is our fortune, or misfortune, to be living in this time. By accident of birth, which can be as casual as death.

So the world is ready for an Anti-Christ. He may be born already in a flat, or in a summer bungalow. Where the asphalt ends in nothing, and the new houses are not yet built. In a caravan or trailer, under a piece of sackcloth propped upon sticks, or in the town of petrol tins. But the whirlwind comes from far. It is the dervish running, wild and naked, by the side of the other winds to incite them, spinning or dancing in an ecstasy, and falling down from madness. He is the barbarian in whom lost gifts and instincts of human beings are preserved, or born again. Christ and Anti-Christ in their beginnings are the same. That is to say, the pillars of the temples will fall down. The rich will be poor, and the poor will be poorer still. But there has to be the opportunity. When the tree falls of itself. When fire comes and there is no water. When the world is tired of wars. The immaterial is to exorcize the material and bring it down to death. It will be done with thirst and hunger. It is the fight between the fat and the lean. God will be at one time with one side, at one time with the other, though called upon by both. In some places the fat will conquer and the thin will perish. The Judgment is pending and will decide.

The beggar King marches down out of the slums, or up out of the mines. He and his men have everything to gain and nothing to lose, meaning that, in the end, they will lose everything and gain nothing. God will have forgotten to take sides. He has deserted them. Or perhaps he is not there at all. And it has been so every time, but few have suspected.

## Noctuidae

11 Certainly he has favoured the wicked Or is it that they have had their secret plans which have succeeded? In the end no one will be better for it

This is total war And, in the past, there has been total religion, of which the ruined shrines are on every hand Here, and everywhere, not of one faith alone, but of all the religions There has been total religion, and there has been, as well, total instinct, which means the worship of the Muses This is the concern of human beings as much as war or religion More than trade or manufactures, because those are a part of it More than human relationships, because those are its subject matter, in part, and, the other part, the loves and deaths of the immortals Matters that are inexpressible, but in their own fit terms which were invented for them That are intangible and immutable, and of no other token, no other meaning, which have no present value and cannot be sold or bartered There have been times when the Muses reigned, and the Age of Lead It could pass It could be banished in a night But that will not happen We have to continue in it till the change comes from within the thunder cloud It will blow over, and in the pale light we shall know its havoc Many of the living will still be buried underneath the ruins It is unlikely that the storm will die down all at once The end of it will be as leaden as the beginning

This has been the gathering of the thunder The breaking of the climacteric It is at such times that the psyche changes The symbol is a butterfly that flutters at the dead man's mouth Or shall we say a moth? The Pine Hawk (*H. pinastri*) with striped and dappled wings to flit among the pine trunks, The Reed Leopard, the Speckled Footman, the Red Underwing, the Feathered Ranunculus, the Feathered Brindle A few only, of the multitude of moths, but we would watch their mutations<sup>1</sup> Those are the signs of metamorphosis The alterations of the psyche are accomplished in dread darkness Why should the winged race have such colours, for they take to their hiding places in the dawn, or beat, blindly, upon the windowpane? It is all a mystery

Are there no dying colours in this world of ours? There are none, none, none Only the love, or bravery, of the common man The death agony of the world has no changing colours in its flukes It does not die like the dolphin, or like the autumn trees It is like a stained newspaper that has wrapped up fish or meat It is like an old bandage with more oil on it than blood It is because we have no corporate, nor corpuscular life in us The individual has had to prowl outside the tenements This has been the fate of the artist And now it is too late The world has to be begun anew

The birth agonies have begun And they cannot be delayed Gestation has been slow and the labour long But some of the symbols are the same for birth as for death There is the winding sheet There are the swaddling clothes There is the washing with water More often than not, it is at the same hour, when night dies into day The bowl, the sponge, the vinegar are waiting ready There is the cup to lift up to the lips There is the sweat of agony There is the voice which is inarticulate, or raving

<sup>1</sup> *P. castaneae*, *C. cribrum*, *Catocala electa*, *E. lichenae*, *A. australis*



## *The Great Anarch*

So it is as though, in symbol, we are born and die within our mother. Our birth has been her mimic, or her pantomimic death. And her dying is that mummie in actual reality. The one thing is preliminary, and inevitable to the other, just as the midwife may be attendant to the dead. Her hand closes the curtain eyelids, to keep the day out for evermore; works the hooked jaw until it shuts, combs and brushes the dead hair, and folds the hands upon the breast. She knows the facts of life and death. She notices the change into the first marks of corruption, the falling in of the cheeks, the thinning of the hands, the livid tint coming fungus-like, from within, and tinting the entire flesh, the discoloration of the juices. This person who watches so closely over life and death must have some theory as to what lies behind the facts. But she knows no more than those who have never seen a child born, nor a woman die.

The babe is just like other babes. If he had a forked tongue, or serpent-lidded eyes! He is only mortal, like every other being who has ever worked miracles upon earth. He will be the creator of opposing systems. Of a philosophy which undermines, and dispossesses. Therefore, this world is only dying in its present phases. Good and evil have their meaning for both sides. The Great Anarch has the blood of revolution in him. But there is the philosophy, as well, of soft resistance, of the vegetable growth which paralyses and kills by inertia. Of the weeds which will choke the golden harvest. Of the tares and poppies which advance into the wheat. Of the blue cornflower. Of the slow creeping slug upon the silver leaf.

Good and evil can be so many different things. There is storm and lightning, and the soft friend of snow. There are the rocks in flower and sweet honeysuckle in the slums. There is the wisdom of disassociation. There is wisdom, too, in being killed for glory. There are the weapons of both fire and water. One which consumes, and one which kills by suffocation. Which shall it be? Which way will the world turn? There is that great part of it which desires, most of all, that it should be left alone. That is not interested in the politics of power. But that forms the body which is wounded by the needle and the scalpel. The rabbits or guinea pigs of the experiment. The passive public that, in the end, may stifle the aggression. And thus may be the only way the action ends.

But the Great Anarch will work afterwards. He needs dead or diseased bodies through whom to spread infection. He needs apathy and disillusionment. Such are the illnesses that strike when one is sleeping, and that have taken by the morning. A long period of sickness ensues that cannot be abated. The malady has to take its course, and none know what effects it will leave. It may injure sight or hearing. It may impede some of the senses. None can deny that it is grave illness. But some are killed as by the stroke of lightning. They are struck down and blinded. There are sicknesses of spirit that no hand can heal. Rain falls before, and after, it has thundered. And the Great Anarch may creep up behind the storm. He may be the inundation, and not the fire. He may form the quagmire, and not the burning ruins. He may not be the person whom all have feared, but someone else, of unknown name, for whom that other was

## *Foot-and-mouth disease*

but the flash of lightning before the breaking of the tempest The ancillary of disaster, final and irremediable Or of redemption, for those who ride with him and feast among the fallen stones

For it can be a combination of diseases, one upon another, opening like a nest of boxes It would seem improbable that so many blows should fall If the whole of civilized history is taken as so many successive attempts, in different times and places, which have all failed or been defeated, then it will be accepted that there have been many Anti-Christ. But is our own time civilized? Where are its monuments? Everything of the spirit has been individual The arts have been anarchist or amateur, absolutely without encouragement in nearly every instance, but adopted halfheartedly by the state, after the death of the artist, and then claimed as part of the national possession This can but get worse, and not better The public are unconcerned, for it cannot reach to them in any way They are indifferent through ignorance If our age perishes it will not matter, so long as it is succeeded by something more spiritual Of which there is little hope For its danger is stagnation, not convalescence Point, then, to Christ or Anti-Christ! For our concern is not with good or evil It is the study of opposing principles, good or bad, it does not matter But we would have them for their incident, in order that they should compose into a work of art Christ and Anti-Christ are not intended in their literal meaning, but for the clash of contrasts or of circumstances It is the contest, in another sense, between classical and romantic, between the long heads who design beforehand, and those who work impulsively, between the cold and fiery, between outline and colour And they are interchangeable They are to be found upon different sides The one can be mistaken for the other It is part of the plan that each shall masquerade as the other The names of Christ and Anti-Christ may, from now on, be forgotten For this is to be no study in Christianity It is an interpretation of different principles, and their treatment is to be the theme and subject

For the sky darkens It becomes still more livid Persons, who were fleeing, but rush into the storm and are caught up by it There has never been such howling of wind, or such rumours of disaster It is not possible to stay, hidden, until the storm has blown over For the building is on fire It is burning to the ground with all its contents Nothing will be saved All will be homeless The living will be left in a blackened land They will have forgotten their wisdom, and learned nothing but methods of killing and destruction The ruins are pulled down It is not yet time to build anew But the gaps and empty spaces are to prevent the spreading of the flames It is when the herds are slaughtered to avoid infection Their carcasses are burned upon great pyres, and the tainted smoke blows far and wide All that is left are calcined skulls, whiter than ash, and their evil smelling horns, but halfconsumed, and too hot to touch In the same way, this is a smouldering earth The wooden beams have gone to charcoal The stones are quite discoloured The metals are all fused and twisted, and have run together into coalescence

## *Tank column on the move*

The voices of madness call out from behind the walls. A long wavering cry which could be mistaken, far off, for the muezzin. Listen! listen! It begins again. It lifts and falls. It seems to come from a high building in the middle of the town, and it would reach to you below, walking by the allotments. The county jail, or could it be the Kasbah? Or the Alcázar, which has deep dungeons, and also, prison cells up in the attics.

The tower of Cuenca, when opened in the Spanish Civil War, had a great vault or a cone shaped like a hollow chimney, in which the blackened corpses of four hundred years ago still hung from iron hooks, or were manacled into slots or niches that were contrived high upon the sooty wall. It was a giant oven, where living prisoners had been incinerated, during days and nights. Burnt bones and tinder of what once had been living persons was scattered, inches deep, upon the floor and had sifted into the corners, but, for some reason, this last ogre's meal was disturbed, or left untouched. They hung there, in the bat winged dark, when Doña Maria das Neves rode upon her white charger below the walls and the Carlist trumpets sounded for the assault and sacking of Cuenca. That was long ago. The priests in their gigantic shovel hats, the headgear of Don Basilio, were as numerous as crows upon a ploughed field, there were muleteers, and music of the guitar and castanets. The dark tower still kept its secret. It only revealed it when the sky was red with dawn, when years of starvation lie ahead.

That voice is correct in what it prophesies. This is the reign of madness. The air darkens with steel wings. All men are dressed to match the yellow mud. For the fields are churned and trampled. In the dawn, while the moon is yet shining the noise of machinery begins. They have started moving. The column of tanks is on the march. It is a curious and ghostly sound in the cold morning. Perhaps it would be more menacing still in the dawn of a summer day.

It is a cranking, a slow, relentless turning, turning, as though of some gigantic centipede with many limbs that beat upon the air, and that progresses by mere weight of numbers, without mercy, to itself or others. It will advance, cost what it may, or be overturned upon its back, insect-like, heaving and struggling, with insect mind, which is little more than instinct, compelling it to work its limbs.

But the tanks are in no difficulty. They are upon the road. They are coming down the hill. We hear their noise of metal in the December moonlight. At halfpast eight in the morning, but it could be the middle of the calm and frosty night. Which way are they coming? They must be at the top of the road, among the houses. They must be in the town. And, with a roar, one tank comes round the corner, in evil and blinding flashes of its lights, with more tanks behind it. They are monstrous insects, like insects, again, in the way they keep on trying. They take the wrong turning, and reverse in their own length, breaking down the pavement. And with still louder roar, swivelling round their turrets, they crank down the street, one behind the other, out of the town, and are lost into the fog.

## Book Four

### GIFTS OF THE MAGI

#### 1. Badinerie, and Picnic by the Sweet Waters of Asia

**M**y first object is the head of a masked girl not more than three inches high You could look at her for a long time, or for ever Because, in herself, she has immortality, but can be shattered to bits in a moment, and become but broken china

Instead of hair, her head is dressed with flowers That is to say, her hair is brushed up above her ears and temples, but where her curls should be, they are metamorphosed into flowers Into a tower, or nosegay, of little precise petals that would snap quickly, or would chip their edges Roses, pinks and daisies painted in gay colours, and that have all but scent

But now, she turns from nature into comedy

Her forehead is completely right You would know from her forehead what her face must be A moment ago it was as though you held a lovely head up by its hair, which had been transformed into flowers, but now it is a face hidden entrancingly, and on purpose, by a mask And not an ordinary mask This is cut differently It is as fanciful as the cut leaf of a tulip tree

The cheeks or fesses of her mask are nearly swallow tailed Like the wings of a swallow tailed butterfly Not so large as a swallow tail, not forked, or like long coat tails, for they curve round, they are cheeks or fesses moulded to the curve of the cheek bone The fascination of this mask comes from the white lights of china upon its black contours. Indeed, the curves of her mask make the two halves, or separate beauties, of the whole And her nose is where the body of this butterfly should be

Her eyes are green or hazel, like eyes seen from an inch away in the strongest light Whether sunlight or candlelight, it does not matter But they are enclosed, surrounded, in the black of the mask And again, they are a pair You can look closely, and see the mock suns and the iris She has painted eyelashes Her eyebrows you cannot see, for they are hidden in her mask So that they are a pair of black cheeks, with the white and carmine of the flesh shown only round her mouth The scarlet of her lips is as though in reply to this concealment Ready to speak, but rather full with silence or disdain.

We have said that her nose is the body of this butterfly And, by its angle, it bears out the simile of flight For it rises, in enchantment, from the face, between the black wings of the mask But its light or comedy

## Mezzetin

character, borne out by her red lips, is contradicted in her mitre of little, formal flowers

She turns from comedy into nature, and is the head of Ceres A head of Ceres, or a caryatid A figure that carries flowers a garden term. And a goddess of Comedy again The stopper of a scent bottle, or a little patch box

There are other things, the handles of walking sticks which are masked faces A masked beauty or the head of Harlequin Sometimes, Janus-like, with heads that face both ways, so that you see the beauty, in profile, both sides at once, or, if it be Harlequin, one face solemn, and the other smiling A seal of Harlequin in a sentrybox, not more than an inch high Another stopper can be a white swan with a golden collar shaped a like a golden crown, worn at the middle of its lovely neck And a group of Cupids, clothed or naked, building a house of cards

But here is something beautiful, and more full of meaning

A big and placid face, which is expressionless, and not higher than the finger

A man's head, clean shaven, round as Phoebus But the curious point is that it is a moonlight face taken out into the day For the head is shaven It must have close cropped hair It is the head to wear a nightcap For, in fact, it belongs to the time when wigs were worn Without their wigs they wore nightcaps and dressing gowns That is why we say this is a physiognomy for candlelight taken by surprise out in a summer morning In fact, a theatre face It was conceived for artificial light It has paint upon it Round patches, or almost round, upon the cheekbones, so that they are like a hectic flush, except that there is nothing feverish, all is placid and moonlit in expression Indeed, the face is quite blank and mask-like, but for its colour, and for the eyes, which are light brown They are the eyes of a man who would have light brown hair Who is highly intelligent, and who plays a part

The eyes are used to a strong light He has not been taken out of the dark into the sun He is accustomed to as bright a light as this, but of another sort That is why he has paint upon his cheeks

Does he wear a cotton nightcap, or a kind of turban?

He has the most poetical of headdresses that has ever been invented It is turban, ruff, and nightcap, all in one It has, also, something of the chef's cap, or the scullion's, and could be worn by the doctor, the peasant, or the lawyer By the Chasseurs Alpains, even, in the mountain villages And yet, it is as simple as a folded handkerchief It is rayed or striped in three colours, red and green and yellow, and they are bright colours, not violent, so that their effect is pale The shape is a ruched cap, or ruff, with the stripes running each in its turn from his shaved head, which is like a mask, but the form of the whole cap is that of a Swiss Guard's cap, worn to one side, and fuller on that side, falling to the ear In fact, a beret, but not the cloth cap For this is silken, or it is striped cotton

But the beauty of this headdress lies in its pleats, or ruchings, and in the rayed stripes, like moonbeams, that follow on each other like the

## *Catlin's Arcadia*

colours of the spectrum. The face of the comedian is the full moon And he wears a cap of moonbeams They are lights on water, or on a moonlit land But the form of the cap is, also, like a ruff, like that of a ruffed lizard, or of a bird of paradise In fact, he has a ruffed head We catch the bright lights of china on each ruching of his cap, and see how the moonbeams waver, but are in regular order, while they break or tally with the folds

His placid face is quite unmoved by this But remark that he has no pallor There is paint upon his cheeks Not, therefore, a mask of melancholy He is, more, that sort of musician who plays in the classical manner, without expression, whose features never alter while the music lasts Not, indeed, a mask of restraint For it is all in the music It is his convention not to be affected by it, but to embody it And his instrument will be the mandoline, or guitar The sling may be upon his shoulder, now But we have only the head of Mezzetin His striped dress we do not see This is nothing but his head and ruff

We know the dress of Mezzetin His striped shirt and trousers, white stockings and black, square-ended shoes Often, he sits cross-legged for convenience of his guitar

We know him, too, with his mandoline slung upon his back Like that, he is the tramp or straggler He is like a soldier with his gun Or a vagabond with his pots and pans He wanders along, slowly, perhaps with a blade of grass or a flower between his lips Cigarettes are not known yet, and a tobacco pipe is as rare a thing as a pipe of opium But he has only to unsling his mandoline, and we shall have music in a moment The gesture is as simple as putting on your gas mask

But a word about the dust upon his shoes

For it is the dust of the theatre, not the mud of the roads Indeed, it is the dust seen in a beam of light If you open your window when it is full moon Or if you come near to the shaded candle Or below the girandole Night dust the sacred dust of the old theatre, which is as holy as the dust of churches It comes up between the boards

This is no statue that has suffered mutilation That has no arms or hands Not dug from the soil, or dragged up in the fishing net It is whole and entire It is the head and the head only But a head and not a bust It has no neck It stands, directly, upon the shelf or table, and can be taken up in the hand

Ah! I have seen him when I was a child Looking down from the asphalt of the Esplanade At the age when shepherd boys, who spend the whole day alone, see visions upon the green hillside I saw him upon the sands and in Catlin's Arcadia That was my education all the summer Now, he will be as old as Pantaloon Walking with a stick But he is dead, of course

I only knew his shadow But a shadow that had colour, not, therefore, quite a ghost

And, later, in the lands of music And in imagination

What a lovely thing! But, to tell the truth I would sooner that he did

## Mock orange

not sing, or touch his mandoline. I prefer the god when he is silent As he is now, with closed lips A Turk's head, almost But he could be no one else than Mezzetin By the double white lilac By the mock orange

Ah! what a breath of milk and honey In a land of milk and honey

An enclosed land, a walled garden near to the Milky Way For such is the philadelphus or mock orange It is a constellation or a starry bush. The creamy flowers are in myriads You can shake the rain from them and smell the mock orange in the raindrops

The white lilac is more melancholy, more nostalgic But how it snares the senses! Somehow the mock orange is more suitable to Mezzetin Because it is a scent, an echo, of the warm South In name only? The white lilac, jasmine, roses, stephanotis, are in another mood But the mock orange is a whole milky constellation Not hanging in pale racemes or snowy trusses, not like the lone meteor in dark leaves, not like the rose, not like the jasmine, but clouding the branches with its cups of milk It is the ghost of the orange grove, a phantom from the citrus lands The mock moons of the Milky Way And the soil is white with the shed petals

The scent of the mock orange is creamy white, like curd, and you taste, in it, the honeyed anthers For his whole figure

For the head of Mezzetin, the single flamed tulip That is to say, we would have the body of Mezzetin by the milky branches, for his striped suit But his bust should be put beside the parrot tulip They are flamed red and yellow, with veins or bracts of the leaf green, and there are so many other colours. Feathered purples, crimsons, golden browns One at a time A tulip for every morning For the tulip has the lights of china on it, and is as high as the bust of Mezzetin, if it is just the head and not the stalk.

It is like a lovely cup put down beside him, that is never touched by lips, and that each night is thrown away And you can compare the featherings and flamings But the tulip is warm to the touch To the quick of the fingernail it feels like living flesh It is alive It is composed of airy cells It is a creature of the sun But this piece of china is completely cold More like moonlight The white paste is like the substance of moonlight That is to say, it is flat and has no depth So must the insect feel that strikes upon the windowpane

For the blank white of the porcelain has some quality that is invisible about it Or shall we say that it is dead, and has been fused in the fire! A dead substance, not organic Moonlight, therefore, compared to sunlight. Where Mezzetin is a nocturnal creature, chameleon of the waxlights, whom it has been our inspiration to stand by the white lilac And, now, by the painted tulip <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The two pieces of old Chelsea china, here described, are the head of a masked girl, and a head of Mezzetin They are illustrated, in colour, in *Chelsea Porcelain Toys*, by G. E. Bryant, the Media Society, London, 1925, and are the work, probably, of the Flemish modeller, Nicholas Sprimont, who came to Chelsea from Liège, and managed the factory.

## *A Turk with a guitar*

But the cosmogony increases. It is a whole world in miniature Or the genius of Johann Joachim Kandler

Here are white horses led by blackamoors They are milk white Lappinizers, with long tails Their milky bodies are naked as Venus, with no saddle or stirrups, taken out of their stalls or riding school into the sun, with an Aethiopian at the bridle We see them, in imagination, by the pillars of a Doric colonnade, near to a rainbow fountain

Or it is a blackamoor standing by a fruit basket

Here are Orientals holding lutes A Turk with a guitar a Turkish woman who holds a zither, or a shell A Janissary, chamberlain to King Dodon, in high peaked cap with a veil that falls behind A kneeling Turk, with his wares spread out beside him, becomes a silk clad figure with a sugar bowl We are taken into an Orient of the fancy, which, in fact, had existence, not so long ago The shell could be one of those giant clam shells from the Pacific, used for holy water bowls in the gilded churches of the South, and taken, now, inside the gilded lattice As for the Heyducks or Janissaries they are the curious, neuter guardians of the Seraglio Their long gowns and conical or peaked hats relate them to beehive or antheap

We will have a picnic along the Bosphorus Down by the Sweet Waters of Asia<sup>1</sup> Those who resort from the European shore come in caiques, those from the Asiatic in the arrhuba It is a Friday or the Turkish sabbath, and a golden evening Among the fruit sold is the grape, or yellow chaoush, which tastes of dew and honey For there is a great concourse of persons from both continents, divided by the narrow straits, and a multitude of veiled women

Moving among them we see the vendors of sweetmeats and confectioners, with tables set up beneath the plane trees They are selling sherberts Of raisins, pears, and prunes and quinces, cooled with ice Many other sweets, as well A confection of rice, boiled down into a jelly, which is cut into squares or slices with a brass shovel, and has attar of roses dropped upon it from a perforated silver vessel A sweet, too, which is made from honey and almonds, another of walnuts, and another of honey and the juice of fresh ripe grapes, which is formed into large square dice Besides, there is the water seller, moving in and out among the crowd, with his glass cups and long spouted jar When called, he attaches a mass of snow to the spout, and the water comes forth cool and limpid through the pores

<sup>1</sup> The Sweet Waters of Asia are on the far or Asiatic bank of the Bosphorus, about half-way between Constantinople and the Black Sea The Sweet Waters of Europe are beyond the Mosque of Eyoub, at the end of the Golden Horn Both were celebrated, under the Sultans, as places for picnics, and the inhabitants of the Turkish capital and its suburbs, in Europe and Asia, resorted there on days of holiday All travellers describe the scene, down to Théophile Gautier and P. Loti It was the embodiment of the rococo Turkey of Liotard and of the Dresden china figures, and as such I have tried to add my description of it to the rest.



## *The arrhuba*

Wherever we look there are veiled women They are sitting in long rows upon the ground, or walk slowly, leading their children A negress or two are among them All are alike as nuns In black dresses, mostly, some in white, but all with the white headwrapping, which covers the face and conceals all but the eyes It is, therefore, like a nuns' picnic, but for the plane trees and the fountains But for the stork's nest upon the minaret We can see the balcony for the muezzin, and hear the clacking of the stork's beak

But, too, for this fountain For it is a kiosk, or an arabesque A square pavilion of marble, with the wide roof of all Turkish fountains, and a bason to which gilt cups are chained, with a dervish or other person to dispense the waters There is a Turkish café, too, where coffee is drunk, interminably, as though it were potent as opium Other buildings show, mysteriously, between the trees In every direction there would seem to be the carved balcony, or gilded lattice

The forms of the turbans are as elaborate as in a fairy story After a few years they will be forbidden, and it will be as though peony or tulip were banished from the flowerbed For this is a land where the arts are sumptuary If we follow one of these turbaned merchants to his house, it will be a mean dwelling, with nothing in it No furniture, for they sit, and sleep, upon the floor All their magnificence is in their clothes And only with the men The women are like veiled nuns, until they go back to their bare walls

The Sultan has a pavilion in this valley of the Sweet Waters, where, Tartar fashion, he shoots with a bow and arrow on these summer evenings, or watches the play of marionettes Ah! what a golden evening Of the Sweet Waters of Asia But the shadows lengthen The painted caique warts with gilded oars

They return in the arrhuba

Here come those carriages, slowly, slowly, at the pace of the white oxen For the arrhuba is a chariot drawn by buffalos The thick locks between their horns are stained with henna, like the ladies' fingernails, and below the dyed hair they have amulets of beads upon their foreheads They are longhorned oxen, but it is only now we see the beauty and peculiarity of the arrhuba

For it is all curves and arches The carriage, itself, is gilded and floreated, in arabesques, and has oval windows on all four sides, filling the whole space, but for the gilded frame It is more open than a gondola, so curved and rounded that it appears to float upon its wheels, although it has no springs One after another the arrhubas come into view, each with four ladies in it, who sit upon the floor The curves of their cowed heads, their full sleeves and wrists that hold a fan, fill the gilded cabins And they are led along, so slowly, with eunuchs walking at the sides, and a man who holds each buffalo by the curving horn

But another singularity of the arrhuba is still to come The carriage is all curves and ovals with its windows and its wheels And there is a peculiar ornament which enhances this The tails of the white oxen are



THE ARRHUBA  
by T Allom



## *The 'Swan Service'*

fastened into a long and lofty wooden bow extending from the neck yokes, and projecting over their backs. This arch is hung with chains of gaudy tassels, so that they sway and dangle, and, in the mind, usurp the place of carriage springs. To the slow treading of the oxen, and the shaking of these golden tassels which could be antennae, some limb or part of which the function is imperfectly understood but which is in connection with the guarding of the women, the arrhuba comes past, and we see the veiled sultanas and hear their muffled voices, hidden in the silks with which their heads are wrapped. One, and then another, the pastoral carriages come by, under the plane trees, with their curious tasselled ornaments dangling from as high up as the carriage roofs. Those coaches could be the howdahs upon elephants, or the wicker cages in which Moslem brides are borne upon the backs of camels.

It is but a short journey out of Asia, under the plane trees, down to the water where the caïques wait. But, in a sense, the procession comes from far away, out of antiquity. This suburb of the Sweet Waters is where Asia ends. But the waters are metropolitan, and face the Golden Horn. How slow, how slow the past dies, and how quickly it is ended! Like this golden sunset. It is borne away from us by the milk white oxen, at the pace that a man walks. Ah yes! this happened, not once, but upon many summer evenings. They must have thought that it would last for ever. Now, all are gone.

We make no excuse for this picnic. It imposed itself. And now we would see gardeners, goose sellers, Savoyards, Tyrolese. A woman with a hurdygurdy, and a Polish lady in a crinoline. Beggar musicians, and a Hussar who plays the bagpipes. Little, longhaired, red and white dogs, Bologna terriers, salt miners, a tailor riding upon a goat, and a lady singing, while a fox sits at the harpsichord. Busts of laughing Chinamen, as though the faun lay under the yellow skin. Pandurs or Circassians, and Japanese.

Or take the 'Swan Service' of Count Bruhl with its nymphs and dolphins, in allegory of water, its tritons and nereids holding shells. Some of the plates of the 'Swan Service' have ghostly swans raised or embossed in the snow white paste, so that they are just the necks of swans and the ghostly reeds or bulrushes. The great dishes and tureens are too elaborate, it may be, with their naked nymphs and sporting dolphins. They are too copious for the fragile porcelain. But the lesser pieces are as fanciful as Bernini's fountains. Yet of another imagery, which is Northern and not Roman. The swans belong to the Baltic. Swans of Denmark, of Livonia, Courland, or Elsinore, of the Goths and Wends. We are reminded of the chapel of Knights of the Order of the Swan, at Ansbach, in the church of St Gumbertus. Built by the Margrave Albrecht Achilles, with its mediæval tombs and hatchments of the Swan Knights. The 'Swan Service' is like the poetical expansion of this theme, but without its chivalry. It is meant for pleasure.

But we return to the 'crinoline' groups, which are characteristic of

## *Morlacchi*

Kandler: Young women in great panniered skirts, pairs of lovers, sometimes in Spanish costumes of the stage. And to the porcelain groups, generally. A group of Cupids hairdressing, where the curiously big heads of the Cupids relate them to the mandarins, or 'Malabars', as they were called, and Cupid as Harlequin. He has baby legs, a dunce's or a Pierrot's cap, the curls of a little boy, a white mask with slit eyes, a Pierrot's white ruff, and the chequered coat of Harlequin, but fitting like a baby's suit. A two year old Harlequin, who is, in fact, Cupid, or a cherub. But again, his large head relates him to the Chinese boys with big heads and hats of cabbage leaves.

Or we find the pair of 'Morlacchi', who, in prosaic language, are a man offering ham to a woman under a tree. But they are 'Morlacchi' by their costume, and called accordingly. For the 'Morlacchi' were a tribe of Dalmatian mountaineers, Illyrians or Albanians, famous for their ferocity, a kind of mountain pirate when most of Dalmatia was Venetian. They but seldom came down into the towns, but had cherry orchards near their villages, from which the cherry brandy of Zara was distilled, so much so that 'sanguè dei Morlacchi' was the local name for this cordial in all Venetian territory.

We could argue, also, an Albanian origin for Pierrot. In this way. The Albanian was zany of the Dalmatian seaports, hanging about for hire, and speaking no language but his own. His white fez and white clothes, his doltish or country manners come down from the mountains, made of him a rustic stranger who could be impersonated and played upon the stage. Certain it is that Pierrot wears the white cap and trousers of the Shqipniter or Albanian. The ill or malarial Albanian who is longing for his native land. He cannot be understood. His long sleeves and ruff are the licence of the theatre, and this gives us Pierrot of the Venetian stage.

And now for the Harlequins of Kandler.

No two of them are alike. In the colours of the cherry orchard. Masked, of course, sometimes, half Pierrot, in Pierrot's ruff and his white buttons, with a white mask and a black hat like a priest's biretta. Holding a dog, a Chinese pug dog, but wearing breeches and not Pierrot's trousers. Or sitting upon a tree stump, holding a mug of beer. Crouched, in fact, like a many-coloured panther, all lozenged and diamonded, his arms and body in one colour scheme, and his legs in another. In a dancer's white shoes. Sometimes in a mask, half white, half black, or all in white, with a white mask, and a white coat which has black seams down the sleeves.

In which case, he is only known for Harlequin by the playing card upon his coat. It may have been Kandler's particular invention, but it had its origin and meaning. For the particoloured suits were sewn like patchwork quilts, with the aid of playing cards, in order to get the diamonds or lozenges into their proper order. This will have suggested leaving a playing card among the other diamond shapes, and, in the end, only a few out of a pack of cards, in elimination of all the other checks. One playing card upon a suit of white, and the comedian turns from

## *A suit of cards*

Pierrot into Harlequin. And particular cards, of course, had their esoteric meaning

Such Harlequins out of a pack of cards have the eight of diamonds, perhaps, or the five of hearts, upon their coat sleeve. Sometimes, upon one arm, or one side only, the other half of the body being blank. It is enough, so long as the coat and trousers have black seams. By a kind of poetical economy, the entire Harlequin is suggested by just the one card showing. He wears a white ruff, and has the ace of spades above his heart, an undress Harlequin, the scullion of the castle kitchens, or the Court Jesters, Joseph Frohlich and Postmaster 'Baron' Schmiedel, for the British Minister to the Saxon Court tells us that the King (Augustus III) 'always dines with company, and his buffoons make a great noise and fight with one another during the whole repast'. But, in truth, this particular Harlequin of the playing cards is found nowhere else, and may have been an invention of the Saxon-Polish Court. There are, even, instances where his red and white cheeks and flaxen, wig-like hair relate him to the peasant dolts or knaves, and to the Four Ivans of the Russian legend.

We hear the echo of this pandemonium and laughter, and of the rattling plates, in the group of a seated lady with a cavalier kissing the hem of her dress, a servant carrying fruit upon a dish, and Harlequin teasing 'Baron' Schmiedel with a mouse. Or it is a lady and gentleman, seated, with a pair of Harlequins, one offering them a plate of fruit, and the other hiding behind their backs. Or Harlequin crouches upon the ground, at their feet. Or sits at a table beside another man, and holds a monkey, or holds a monkey's tail and blows a horn. Or but bows low, mockingly, and is about to spring. Columbine pushes away Harlequin, or her lover is on his knees before a lady, Cupid brandishes his bow and arrow, but Harlequin leers sardonically.

But we come back to the cherry orchard, because a woman is sitting underneath a little tree, with a bowl upon her lap, near a little table with cups and saucers standing on it. A pair of parrots are in the branches, and she is offering them cherries. Behind her stands Harlequin. He has white trousers, a white ruff, and lesser white ruffs upon his sleeves, black dancing shoes, with buckles, a black hat like a Pierrot's hat, and a mask in natural colour, which is to say, red and white, with flaxen hair that is certainly a wig. We can tell that he is an actor by the gestures of his hands. He is calling out to the parrots, probably in a voice that they will imitate. And his red coat is completely covered with the playing cards. All at different angles, and all high in their different suits, sixes, fives, or eights. His hands, in his white gloves, so near to these, are part of his mocking attitude.

It means much, or nothing. Probably nothing. It is, even, part of the quality of porcelain that it is so fragile. If it is broken, which card will lie uppermost? Perhaps his head and white ruff will have rolled a little way? Or his white gloved hand? Perhaps the room will, suddenly, darken while we look at him. For, all this time, something has been preparing.

## Coloured papers

We hear a grinding, screeching Of brakes Of some engine broken down,  
which tries to start up again

Turn over in your sleep, and dream another dream <sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Age of Genroku

It is the time, or age, of flower arrangement Presents are carried in, that are all wrapped in silk napkins and tied with red and white cords in special knots The exquisite joining and delicate grain of the wood of the boxes is an aesthetic pleasure in itself

This is the greatest age of the aesthete there has ever been

The paper on which poems are written can have flakes of gold in it, as though they were flakes of chocolate floating in a bowl of cream Thin, long squares of it, miraculously disposed, and beaten in But it can be more fanciful than that The gold leaf is placed upon a chamois skin, cut with a bamboo knife, and then torn by hand or pulled apart according to the perforations Different names are given to the cut leaves according to their shape 'hail', which are round or square, like hailstones 'sand', which are in dust or powder and 'hair', thin pieces which are like dry grass or reeds Gold leaf is never put upon the paper in a geometrical design, but it appears irregularly, as though thrown down haphazard, according to the rules of the landscape, and not the formal, gardener Yet it has been mounted with most meticulous and exact care Besides

<sup>1</sup> Johann Joachim Kandler (1706–1775), the chief modeller at the Meissen factory, and one of the supreme geniuses of the age of rococo, is to be studied in *Dresden China*, by W B Honey, London, A & C Black, Ltd, 1934 This work of information contains full details of Kandler's incredibly fertile output, together with a working bibliography by means of which he can be traced, in illustration, through the various German authorities and the catalogues of sales In the preceding pages I have tried to resume all the phases of Kandler's activity A book of engravings after the Fleming, J B Van Mour (1671–1737), *Différentes Nations du Levant*, published in Paris in 1714, with text by Comte Charles de Ferriol, and republished by Christopher Weigel in Nuremberg, in 1719–1721, as *Wahreste und neuste Abbildung des Turkischen Hofes*, formed the obvious inspiration for many of Kandler's Turkish figures A delightful painting by Van Mour, from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, was reproduced in *The Architectural Review*, in 1941 The subject was a banquet given to the Dutch ambassador by the Sublime Porte A special pavilion of the Seraglio, the Hall of the Divan, was set apart for these functions The Dutchmen, in periwigs, are seated on a dais against the wall, while some dozen officials and chamberlains, in conical or peaked hats, serve round the dishes Their tall sugarloaf hats and flowered silk gowns make this into a scene from a fairy story In fact, the Turkish decadence was the most picturesque there has ever been A pantomime, and always with an ogre A legend, it could be said, that was flanked by figures in Circassian and Albanian costumes There is no comparable fantasy, of our own time, in which the mind can dwell

### *Millefleurs carriage*

this, the paper is sprinkled with mica, but all must appear as a natural and spontaneous arrangement, without formula or rule

The separately dyed papers, yellows, scarlets, greens, or purples, are put together in layers which have overlapping edges, in the manner of the five or seven gowns of the Court ladies, worn one upon another, in graded sizes, the top coat of all having the shortest sleeves, so that the five or seven colours show at the wrists and hems. In the same way, with the layered papers, the darkest paper comes uppermost, and the tones are made lighter, as it were in steps, or in gradations. And now all is ready for the brush or pen of the calligrapher

Brilliant screens of gold and silver spangled paper are carried into the room. A pair of screens are painted with great hawks perched upon snow covered pine trees. The green lichen shows, too, in pattern upon the tree trunks. Or it is the red gold persimmon against the lapis water. The Seven Sages have met among the cedar trees to listen to music of the flutes and pipes. There are flowering palisades of morning glory, of convolvulus and wistaria, cockscombs like bursting rockets, gourds and melons, plum and cherry blossom, like snowstorms arrested and held still for a moment, until there is time to see the eyes in all the crystals, and the pattern of their falling

Or the stallions are in the stable, the partitions are of new grained wood, under the sighing, drooping green bamboos. In the painting of these horses, the hair of their manes and topknots is combed into a dozen or more tufts or brushes, and their tails are encased in long bags of silk, tied at the root with red and white silk cords and tassels. There are snow white stallions with black legs, but brown-black like the blemishes upon the Manchurian snow leopard, those that are fawn-coloured with white chests and bellies, the brown marked, almost, with a shell pattern in their coats, the jet black with white feet and snow white markings, delightful in contour, upon their chests and saddles, the piebald and the skewbald, all prancing and curvetting in their stalls, tied at the head by twined ropes of black and white to metal rings driven into the woodwork, and with much thicker ropes of black and white, braided with red, hanging under their bellies, or coiled up to the ceiling

Upon another screen the plovers settle near the nets that are pitched like tents, close to the watermill, and on either side, the long sockets of the wheel turn upon a little sawn-off tree trunk that could be a stem of coral, down by the sandy estuary. There are screens painted with ceremonial carts and waggons, with millefleurs spokes, they are so stippled, that emit a sound of music when the wheels go round, carrying flower arrangements by a master hand, the chrysanthemum, and peony, or formal iris, or the objects depicted could form a lesson in the art of tying parcels. These are presents of ceremony, a box of eggs, a hamper full of pears and oranges, a box of spongecakes, or a tray of persimmons, bunches of flowers, or a lobster lying on pebbles at foot of a dwarf pine tree, all contained in a little, square hamper which has edges, folded back, of spotless paper



## *Kimono*

Or there can be a pair of screens with nothing upon them but clothes-horses, upon which garments are hung up, but these have patterns of fans, each with its own subject painted upon it, and wonderfully displayed to show their slats and curves, flower patterns, mere stripes or bands, but of incredible boldness in their contrasts, or, even, whole landscapes, sometimes, a classic scene, a famous waterfall, or a lake and mountain, or else of meandering streams, and split bamboo fences of a particular and symbolic pattern, bamboo rafts and bridges, thistleheads, cloth curtains, straw covers, bulrushes, paper lanterns, the reeds and grasses, signs of the months or seasons, or particular leaves that were a private badge or crest

What of the actual dresses worn?

A young girl comes into the room, with oval, floured face and formal eyebrows. She wears a gown with long sleeves, of which the design is a double curve like the half of a figure eight, or the bends of the Grand Canal at Venice, but the pattern is of swirling red waters, or rather, they are cinnamon in colour, with white bands of foam, while the banks, which are white as snow and bare as that, have clumps of blue iris growing on them

Another dress is mottled with large cloud areas, which are red-violet in colour and outlined in white, but these clouds become islands upon which a few red flowers are formalized. The rest of the ground is green, with white sedge and reeds upon it. But this is broken by lines, all slanting in one way, which are formed by an edging of little blue squares, with a mesh of white lines dividing them, and which could be the border or edging of a mat the ground of that being part white, part pink, two of these mats, if they are that, stretching, diagonally, from top to bottom of the garment, in two parallel, but slanting bands, breaking the green ground, with the white grass and rushes waving above them as though growing from a border, and with the red-violet cloud areas looming out towards them, but not touching them. The pink parts of the ground have white flowers, the white ground has formal bouquets of many coloured flowers, with mysterious and richly coloured lengths, of patterned stuffs, like presents of silks, tied or knotted to them. The natural folds into which the garment falls further enrich and diversify the design, by juxtaposition of its motifs, cutting short one run of its complicated ornament, and breaking all the fields together, one into another, so that it is the whole pattern, all over again, from its beginnings, and it is too rich and complicated to seize in detail

Yet another dress is a rosy haze from the neck downwards, like the mist that hangs above a snowy landscape at sunset or sunrise, which becomes whiter, as it would do, when the snow begins, which is where the pattern comes. There is an edge of shadow thrown into this, like shadowed branches, and then, on a darker ground, come drooping boughs of willow trees, outlined by the snow upon them, with purple cloud masses caught, in their other element, among the branches, flying swallows with forked tails, and at the foot, imperial, two-wheeled, hooded

## *Eaters of live fish*

coaches embedded up to their axles in the snowdrifts Another is of rushing waterfalls in blue and white, tumbling this way and that, among flowers and birds, upon a field of spray that merges into the sky Or, upon a plum coloured dress there are lattice fences, and many flowers, and, upon another, on a ground of black, are board fences, with the graining of the new wood shown, the fences running zigzag, like the leaves of screens, as though they were so many bridges or stepping stones in a water garden

There can be a whole landscape, in simplicity, upon a potter's bowl Snow laden pines, or a design of nothing in particular, but which satisfies There has never been such aestheticism or such artificiality Nothing great or epical but the utmost perfection of little things Such a spell or lull of peace as should have brought disaster, but it never came Must we not envy them? Their skill had done everything to deserve it These dresses, at least, are incredible masterpieces of the art of weaving Their naturalism, their formal informality, has appeared nowhere else Of many different theories, as they could be schools of landscape gardening Perhaps the boldest and simplest is the best, that of the swirling red waters and the irises growing upon the banks This, or its kind, has been seen nowhere else in history It is the whole of a civilization in a pattern upon a dress It has volcanic fire, and tidal waves, and earthquakes in it The huge waves roll in, unbroken, from the vast Pacific As for the river waters, they are tinged from the red volcanic rocks The sunrise comes across five thousand miles of ocean This can, perhaps, explain the golden background and the use of gold leaf in their paintings The craze, also, for simplicity, which is their highest artifice, as in this pattern for a dress It is equivalent to a day of fasting, after a feast of plenty These are orient shores, facing the emptiness, places of great population, and then nothingness With the teeming East near to them, and in their midst, but, beyond, lies the wilderness of waters It starts where the last cormorant fishermen lose sight of land, where the wild rocks with their stunted pine trees go down in the immensity, and there is nothing, nothing, till the other world begins

Also, this is a religious, or literary, simplicity And, in no other part of the world have such refinements in taste had seven or eight centuries of practice Something vital, which must be in the air or climate, has kept them precious, but not made them lifeless They renew themselves out of their own antiquity It is a run of numbers, or a succession of fresh turns These are flowering ruts made by their chariot wheels The wooden stakes have burgeoned it is a growing soil

They have enormous cities in which comedians could study poor humanity, and watch the shadows upon the paper walls And the reason for this extreme aestheticism is to be found in the squalor and degradation of the slums They are eaters of live fish, the ichthyophagi of the ancients, and could remind us of that Indian nation, mentioned by Strabo, who built their houses of the bones of fishes It might, almost, be said of such poverty that it represented a civilization in itself In so many countries

## Coolie

there are these scavengers. They are dwellers outside the walls. Below the great Potala they live in huts made of the skulls of sheep and yaks; and are the executioners, and bring out dead bodies to be devoured by the dogs and vultures. Here, they are skimmers, tanners, grave diggers, leather dressers, all who handle raw hide, or bury animals. Below them are another caste, whose very name implies that they are not human, who live on the waste lands, and as might be expected, are the executioners. They are not allowed to go into a house, or eat or drink, or cook with other mortals. In all instances they appear to belong to a race apart. Here, the story goes that they are descendants of the men who killed animals for feeding to the imperial falcons. This, in itself, could be material for many pages, or many painted screens.

Here, and in China, they may have had cities of a million souls, while none such existed in the Western world. 'Hai! hui-dah! ho! ho! hai! hui-dah! wa! ho! ho! hui-dah!' the coolies call out, as they push and pull their carts along. The town pullulates, like an anthep, and is in continuous movement, just as the grains of earth in an anthep, that seem to move, of themselves, so that the whole of it is teeming, or even in the act of increase, and obscene and horrible for that reason. The expectoration of these million yellow men would form a pool in which their favourite eels could lie, or coil on the slimy bottom. The wax from their ears could be melted on the wings of Icarus and bring him down into the sea. There could be tubs of their yellow fat, as though the whalers lay with dead leviathan to either side and blubber heaped the stinking decks. We hear their raucous and gurgitating tongue. When spoken, it is like a hangman's jokes, or the patter of an acrobat before he attempts the most violent of his turns. Physical pain or discomfiture are its humour. It is the wit of the baboon mound, and they are not much different when they drunk or eat. But the whine of the beggars would outmoan the four winds of heaven.

It is impossible to relate ourselves to either rich or poor. Not because it is the past of five hundred or a thousand years ago, for that can be overcome and gives no difficulties. But this is distant in the sense in which another creation is remote. It could be the kingdom of the birds, and by no stratagem can we clothe ourselves with plumes, whether in the crest and gorget of the painted pheasant, or in the dabbled locks of the foul carrion bird that flaps above the refuse heaps. There can be no contact or propinquity but in the imagination. We are as far separated as from our physical body after death. There is the visual or aural approach, but none other, and nothing of the flesh. The appeal is entirely to the aesthetic senses of delight or horror. There can be no other role than that of spectator, but this can be from as close as possible to the arena. There can be no contact but that of sight or hearing. There are no half-castes born of this marriage. Indeed, there is no progeny at all. It is a mercenary affair, and the mart is for images and metaphors. But we must come out from it in order to return into the slums. We should learn to love the soot upon the windowpane. The soft frost flowers die in the heat of the breath. So

### Cistercian

fade the golden screens and that world of spangled pattern. Factories have been put up, instead, with long sheds or dormitories. The golden age darkens, all over the world, into the age of steel or lead.<sup>1</sup>

## 3. À l'Espagnole

The white acacia is in flower

We will go to the little town of Ecija with its china domes and towers. Or red brick Carmona, which was a Roman, and then a Moorish town. All in Andalucia, at the season when donkey foals run with their mothers and are tied up at the door. When the storks are upon the chimneys, having crossed from Africa. From ibis-haunted fields of snowy Atlas, and rocks where the almond is in blossom.

There are to be a Messiah, a Messianic message, and false Judgment Day. Much else besides.

This desert country is ideal for the practice of manoeuvre, and has been chosen by the generals of both sides. It will begin at 843220 upon the large scale map, commencing 00 60 sharp. Messages will be headed 'ex-Judgment Day'. That is the name of the exercise. A number of umpires and observers will be attached to units. Have you forgotten The Three Witnesses?

Do you remember a court of orange trees, and under an archway, below a library, a stuffed crocodile that hung from the ceiling. Or was it a wooden crocodile? It had been sent, this was the legend, by a Sultan of Egypt in exchange for a princess's hand. Or, in another place, in a calm vessel of cold, Cistercian architecture, a pair of coral doorways? Like stems of branching coral from the Indian reefs. Near by, in its own fountain house, the water splashed down from the double basins. This was in Portugal. How many Cistercian buildings must there have been, chosen for their abundant waters, and clear and sane as the cold springs. With names like Fontfroide, or Clairfontaine. Of an architecture which has never been more masculine, and which compares, in that, to the Carrene mosques of the great Moslem period, of Sultan Barqûq or Sultan Hassan.

<sup>1</sup> Our account of the *Kasane-tsugi* or layered papers is taken from *Japanese Scroll Paintings*, by Kenji-Toda, the University of Chicago Press, 1935, pp. 36-8. They are, mostly, twelfth and thirteenth century in date. The painted screens are illustrated in *The Screens of the Momoyama Period, 1573-1615*, by H. Minamoto, Meiji-Shobo Press, Tokyo, 1935. Japanese textiles are to be studied in *Kimonos, a hundred masterpieces of Japanese costume*, by Tsutomu Ema, Tokyo, 1935. This work, in two volumes, with splendid plates in colour, deals chiefly with dresses of the Genroku period (1688-1751), of the process known as *Yuzen* dyeing. Some of the designs were by Korin, as that of the cinnamon waters, here described, with white bands of foam, carried out in the workshops of *Yuzen*, according to his secret processes, and with a technical ingenuity that has never been equalled in the history of textiles.

## *'Burlington Bertie'*

But, for all that, we would not have been happy there. That slow, organic growth, which took centuries, so that the spirit had gone by the time the vessel was ready to receive it, for all its cool and grave beauty, is too slow in the return it gave. It is of little use to increase in beauty as the stalactite. The caverns and grottos were a million years in making. But there can be a mood in which man lives to be no older than the orange tree.

Do you remember a little ruined church with five red domes? In a garden of yuccas and pale daturas, that smelt of lemon. In midst of the streets of painted carts. Or Mistra, and the church and mad nun of Pantanassa, above the plain of Sparta? But what good is there in remembering such things? All that is built of stone can perish, or be cut off. We have seen how architecture answers to bombardment from the air. It is quickly 'softened up'. The Parthenon, which the Turks made into a powder magazine, gives us a primitive example of what has been made perfect in our time. And one prostrate column can be held hostage for the rest.

The Temptations of St Anthony, of San Antonio Abad, if true to our own time, must be the illusory pleasures of looking back. For present and future are hidden under a smoke screen or artificial fog, or are even engaged together, out of sight and hundreds of miles apart, as in a modern naval battle. The cannonade is continuous but there comes no sign yet, as to which side will win. Have you been warned? Are you carrying your gas mask? The new table-shelter fits beautifully into the kitchen, and the top of it makes a nice polished table. Any housewife would be proud of it. But be ready with some word-games for when you all must be inside it! Which world, we would ask you, is an evil dream? The canary is singing in its cage. The white mice are playing in the submarine. The eyeless fish swim in the dark cavern. The poppy blooms, yet once again, in Picardy. There are red poppies in Flanders Field, and, elsewhere, the asphodel, or flower of death, or nothing but sand with many treads of wheels.

One word to the nation 'Go to it'. Or two words 'Stay put'. Which does he mean? Is the balloon going up? Hold on to the ropes don't get carried up with it! You will drop on the allotments. The balloons look like silver fish. Like the 'silver fish' that crawl along the larder shelf. We call our balloon 'Burlington Bertie'. Because he rises at ten-thirty.

*Hark! hark! the dogs do bark,  
The beggars are coming to town*

Born in the sound of Bow Bells, and sleeping, 'for the duration', in the Underground shelter. Where are the oranges and lemons? Where is the Beau of Bond Street with his hat and cane and buttonhole?

The next tempting comes in the form of a little dwarf who is waiting at a railway station. To be exact, at Catania, in Sicily, till now a Nazi seaplane base. He is waiting in order to lead us to the churches and the convents to San Benedetto where the dormitories are six hundred feet in

## *Landscape of Toledo*

length, so long that they finish in a point of light to the Palazzo Biscari with its fantastic staircase balustrade. And there is the cretin or idiot of Cefalù.

The idiot of Toledo, too, who lived down in the town of shacks, below the bridge of Alcántara, who had a horrid trick in which he gnawed his arm, the short, stiff arms, held close to the side, of the typical mattoid, carrying a short, knobbed stick, and wearing a beret on his head, and who bore an exact resemblance, spiritual and physical, to one of the mockers or tormentors in El Greco's painting of the Espolio which hung in the sacristy of the Cathedral. The pictures in the churches of Toledo were uncatalogued. In San Vicente there hung his wonderful Annunciation, with its soaring wings and foreshortened faces, its supernatural and phosphorescent gleams of light, the gigantic figures, and the roses and lilies that were like flowers materialized at a séance, but bought, none the less, at the cheap flower stall, and a little panel of St Joseph with the child Jesus, made strange and haunting by the giant stature of the saint, and by the landscape of Toledo upon the hills, low, low, in the foreground.

It is, or would seem to be, a Sunday evening.

We are walking on some hills outside a town which lies spread out before us in the distance like a map or a model in relief. The town is, perhaps, a mile away in all its detail. It covers several hills, and we can see many churches and huge hospitals or convents. The highest point of the town is a square castle or Alcázar, and from that a line of fortifications, or a curtain wall, runs steeply down into a tremendous river gorge, ending in a tower that holds a bridge. There is a lesser tower at the far end of that, and another fort, of many towers, stands on the hill opposite, above it.

There is a curious silence and a slanting light, which is golden, of the late afternoon. What time of year is it? Do they have the seasons here? It is April, the month of visions. The natural and supernatural meet and pass each other by upon these hills. Indeed, the whole scene is an hallucination given reality by this unreal light which excites and tires. It is as though we are tired, and feverish, from too much walking. There are phosphorescent lights in the sky, low down, where the sun will set, and a cold wind, and snow, still, upon the mountains. The night will be chill. And then, of a sudden, it is burningly hot in the slant light.

A few low vines and olive trees. And poplars down by the river. But all flame-like, in their shrill green, like a wheatfield in the rainbow after a shower of rain. And, in fact, one arch of a rainbow plays, like the beam of a searchlight upon the hillside, and touches the foot of the castle above the mighty bridge, and has swung away, a little, over that distant hill. Down which a track winds, but the top of it is lost in the storm cloud.

And now, suddenly, the town with all its buildings looks supremely small. The walls and bastions are no bigger than a model built to scale. It is an effect of this curious, unearthly light. The meaner buildings pour

## *Penitents-Bleus*

like a glacier down the hill towards us and we can follow, in detail, every house and tower down to this suburb that is roofed with tiles and is no more than a collection of sheds of mud or clay, sliding down the hill, and built at every angle to each other. We can look into the courts of the mud hovels. But not a living soul is to be seen. The towers and castles crowd along the sky line, and pour down the hill to poverty by the cesspools near the river. But now they climb up the hill again and it is the heavenly city.

We are walking in this yellow light, made ominous by the coming storm. The great buildings gleam like salt into the sky. It is a huge city seen in this absolute stillness so that it is, at once, big and small. You can turn your back to it and hear not a sound. And turn round again, and there it is before you. Nothing has altered, only another, and another building is discovered by the eyes. And the storm hangs immediately above the town. Its high towers could be pillars of salt lit up by the lightning. Some of the hills are quite blackened by the shadow of the thunder clouds and the effects of light alter, every moment, as the huge beams swing down upon the hills, and stay at a tower's foot, or on the unreal meadows.

Nothing moves. The hills and the distant town are in a trance. But the church bells are ringing, hoarse and vibrant, from the smaller churches and chapels. From all over the town, from its higher and lower quarters. The hour of mystical experience is coming.

In a moment or two our hallucination brings us among a multitude of figures, and we find ourselves walking by a procession of blue nuns. They are dressed in a long robe of blue which covers them from head to foot, carried like a cowl over their heads and faces, and with such immensely long sleeves that we cannot see their hands. The effect of their height comes, in part, from the smallness of their heads, wrapped in the blue folds, and from their long sleeves. For the nuns are inordinately tall, or seem to be in this peculiar light, and owing to the unnatural configuration of their robes. Their height must be of eleven or twelve headlengths, and of course their shadows are even longer upon the meadows, which are one colour according to whether you look at the flame of the grass, or consider the supernatural light upon it. But the leaden storm lies over all, driving down the dust before it. We know that the nuns are not really giantesses, but that their stature is exaggerated in this strange hour.

We get the breath of that storm in little hot winds that, suddenly, blow cool. There could be showers of roses or lilies, not the living flowers, nor yet paper flowers as they are made by female hands, but experiences that count as miracles and which happened, and yet, in truth, there are no flowers at all. The nuns have come out from that nunnery, which gleams like one of the buildings in the town above, but it is some mystical experience in ourselves, or in their own ecstasies, that has made them into huge statues in the meadows.

The colour of their habits enhances all that is odd or strange about them. A seraphic blue for the cloister, as pale a blue as the pale lilac is for

## *Opening of the Fifth Seal*

whiteness It must look so feminine in the bare cell with its bed of straw In the refectory where they eat their meals in silence They could be barefooted Carmelites, and this town in the distance pouring its buildings down the hills could be the city of St Theresa with its granite walls and towers But those are toy forts or chessmen There is nothing to compare with the towers of Avila No! this is the heavenly city The walls, also, have been painted for the walls of Troy But the barefooted Carmelites wear a hood of a brown colour, a white plaited cloak, a scapulary, a patience, and a black hat So that the nuns are a personal vision, and, in fact, they are not there at all

But the town lies there, with the storm hanging over it We have walked in those meadows by the river, and looked up at the town Long ago wondering what would happen to the world in so little a time as twenty years ahead It was a Sunday evening Then, and now, and for ever In the past, and in the future

The huge shadows come along the grass

But time becomes immediate again, in the sense that it is eternal and not pinned down to the moment The churches and convents of the town are so Catholic that they have ceased to be Christian, in particular, and have become shrines of fanaticism belonging to any faith that believes fervently in another life That other world is, even, the air above the altars Miracles have taken place, and been painted, with the saints riding on their clouds in the opened heavens, only a foot or two above the heads of the chief citizens The miracle is above our heads, and below our eyes It is nearer to us than the procession of blue nuns, and not more curious For nothing could be more peculiar than that

Or we are walking in the Jewish quarter of the town The painter lives here in a house which has twenty four rooms and was built by the treasurer, Samuel Levi <sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of him that he should have rented a huge old house in the quarter of the Jews For this town was Toledo, the Hebrew 'city of generations', and the new Zion of the Sephardim The Jews had lived here for hundreds of years before the Goths, before the Moors This is the Visigothic or Mozarabic town the city of the Mudéjar Here are courts of the merchant and the necromancer, and synagogues with galleries for the Jewesses

The palace is empty and hardly furnished, but we should find a cupboard of lay figures or mannikins dressed in stuffs, some, which are intended for the angels, with wires attached for hanging from the rafters This is his place of visions When the shutters are thrown back supernatural forms come in at the windows The gigantic kneeling figure in *The Opening of the Fifth Seal*, with outstretched arms and exaggerated skirt or train that spreads along the earth, a figure like a giant eunuch, or a Skapetz, we should discover that he is a mannikin out of that cupboard

What is the meaning of this giant figure who is sexless? Or an eunuch? What is the reason for the foreshortening of its face? And why, even in its

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Levi, treasurer to Pedro the Cruel, by whom he was tortured and put to death in 1360



## *Riding to the Bullfight*

distortion, does it resemble, feature by feature, the face of St Sebastian in his other paintings? Is the face averted or distorted so that it will not be recognized? It is a sublimation, conscious or subconscious, and being a person of deep religious convictions it probably frightened him, but he could not hold his hand. In the background of the picture there are nude figures of martyrs, men and women, upon whom raiment is descending out of the heavens. And, as always, the sky is stormy. It may mean much or nothing. Probably he knew not what it meant himself.

A moment or two later we are sitting on a seat in a public park, and the other half of the bench is shared by a young man and his wife, strangers to us, and both well dressed, with a beautiful, but pale small child. We hear them talking of bull fights, of how modern education has made the public more interested in football. Of how they would not spend their Sunday afternoons in that way, watching the bulls and horses die. This was long before the bloody Civil War. Where are they now? Their son would be old enough to have been killed upon either side.

This must be the ordinary sunset with unearthly, phosphorescent lights. But, in the smoking radiance that lies over all the landscape, it is as though every sunset must be the last one. Here, with a crowd gathering round, we could watch as if for the last time the sun setting behind the hills. But the crowd are not looking towards the sunset. They are hurrying and running, in one direction only. The bootblacks carrying their wooden boxes. The lemonade sellers. The hunchback with his tray of cigars and matches. All the children in the public gardens. The poor and the well dressed. Only the young man and his wife and child, and a few more, are indifferent. The rest are dragged in, or must watch.

Ourselves among them. And this is what we see. The toreros are riding to the bull fight. Here they come.

An open carriage with a pair of matadors sitting in it, and another upon the box. We recognize the black hats worn by the bullfighters, their hair braided in a pigtail and tied in a black silk net, which is the *redecula* or reticulum of the Roman gladiators, cravats knotted à la Colin, silk sashes, spangled, short jackets glittering with gold and silver, their breeches of red or green or lilac satin, and flesh coloured stockings. Their cloaks or *capas* are upon their shoulders, scarlet or cherry coloured on the outside, and yellow on the inner. Another, and another carriage come by full of matadors, and an open motor car, driven slow. Some of the heroes joke with the crowd, others are silent and contemptuous, or talk together in low tones.

After them rides a *picador* in splendid costume. His figure is sudden and startling because of his enormous weight and size. He is mounted on a wretched horse that will be dead in half an hour, but sits it with a brave and brutal air of the stockyard or corral, as though the ghost of the bull has entered into him. He wears breeches of yellow leather, but, under that, his legs are cased in iron, particularly the right leg with which he faces the bull, as he urges his nag, his blindfold *Rosinante*, towards the horns. The jacket of the *picador* is short and thickly embossed; he has the

## *Boarding house of the Picadors*

black silk snood or redecilla upon his hair, the great broadbrimmed Thessalian hat of felt, with tufts of ribbons, heavy black whiskers, and in his great fist he holds the pike or garrocha

How he must weigh upon Rosinante! But the mare is not tired enough. She cannot be too tired for her purposes. A chulo or servant of the bull ring rode her, blindfolded, from the ring to the boarding house of the picadors, this morning, in order to tire her more. That lodging house is a better subject than an old horse lifted on the horns, and another, and another nag tortured and given up to death. We could have watched him dressing, arranging the snood upon his hair, coming down the narrow stair encased in armour, with iron tread, appearing out of the doorway, mounting Rosinante, while a chulo holds her bridle. Not alone. The other picadors in the boarding house coming out, one after another, and climbing heavily into the saddle.

Here they are. Four or five more picadors upon old, thin nags with dropping heads. Have they never had a horse under them which haunted them when they were asleep? For there is nothing more pitiful than the dying horse in the bull ring. The eyes of Rosinante are already bandaged. Her head droops, and her legs and back are wasted. Behind her go the other nightmare steeds.

A round building, like a gasworks, and a gasworks built upon the model of a Roman circus, can be seen. It is the bull ring. The picadors one behind another, ride very slowly into its shadow. We see them at a moment when, with pikes held upright like a row of masts, all but the hindmost are below the roof line of the building. It is only for a moment, and he, too, rides into the shade.

There comes a surge or thrill of excitement which is indescribable, a thing, not of the brain, but of the blood, while flourishes of trumpets sound from the interior of the bull ring. Not the herald's fanfare, nor the tirralurra of the hunting horn. Death and torture are in its tones. For the dumb animals who have no souls. In their sufferings they are to give pleasure to the men and women of the audience. That is the secret in this shedding of blood. It is the raping of the virgins and sentence of death upon the male, which is carried out upon the spot, only the virgins are old, worn out horses, nags or mares, it does not matter, but they are the spinsters of the comedy, thin and comic, ludicrous in their torments, while the bulls are lusty young males tasting blood for the first, and last time. The punishment for that is death. To-night, not an animal will come alive out of the bull ring.

The temptations take the forms of a feverish struggle to escape, and to be free. Where, where, where? To the Ermita di San Antonio de la Florida. In the fresco, by Goya, there are children climbing on the painted balustrade, and angels who are daughters of the people, well known upon the floats and flower decked carriages of carnival. Upon their balconies, and in the doorways of their street. There are Minervas, Verbenas, and the Romeria. 'But the masked balls cannot be safely visited by

## *Madridlena*

ladies' The women all wear mantillas white on Thursday and black on Friday and red carnations in their hair The noisiest scene takes place before the prison, where the crowd is drinking brandy 'But parties that include ladies should leave before the later part of the evening'

It is the Pradera di San Isidro The capital lies across the Manzanares, in the white light of an afternoon in May The entire river flat, upon this bank, is one enormous crowd of people How pale Madrid looks in the distance! That white mass is the palace of the Bourbons, where the old King's clocks are ticking, and time flies We reached here by the Puente de Toledo, coming through the rag fair This bridge, with its extraordinary, Aztec-looking terminals, is the work of Pedro de Ribera, the wild and much abused heresiarch of an age of fantasy, but nothing could be more suited to carry a great population to a pilgrimage and fair <sup>1</sup> Now, it leads to the town of petrol tins But, at the time we see it, that is a vision of the future

We are in the midst of Majos, Majas, and Manolas, dressed all in their best One or two women sit, on this rising ground, under sunshades, and this suggests that they belong to a better class and have come to watch the popular rejoicing and perhaps walk down among the crowd, but not really mingle with them Below, there are persons, too, who have driven here in carriages, but they are halted upon the outskirts of the crowd Tents are pitched, and there are covered waggon Tranas, segundillas, and boleras are playing They are dancing the gallina ciega in a circle Figures upon the extreme edge of this multitude are seen in outline against the river, which is but a solid and more glassy echo of the sky above the low bank opposite, and the distant town It is the sort of air and climate in which the foreigner does not feel well Because of the sharp light and the snowy chill of the sierra

But now we come down into the crowd In place of this reminiscence of a famous painting by Goya we are given the noisy music of the streets, as Manet and Chabrier must have heard it when they went to Spain together Tunes which require no setting but the littering of the ground Such airs as float in at the window on a hot night, which integrate and take on their shape in the distance, and then burst on the ear in the intoxication of a moment Popular tunes of which it would be impossible to find the author, but which in the middle of the nineteenth century were in their golden prime Played one after another, or all at the same time, with that power of thrilling or tingling the pores of the skin which proves the god in music Street music of Madrid and Valencia Guitar music, but tunes, also, of the zarzuela, which are familiar in the caf  s, at bull fights or the fiesta From near at hand the fandanguillo Quick steps of the muneras, the panadero, and the buleria Above all, the glittering, fast waltz of the estudiantina And in the distance, gliding and floating upon the air, the lazy habanera

The gihadina or hunchback's dance, and the cobbler or zapateado perform in the doorways The first is danced by a man, in midst of a crowd,

<sup>1</sup> Pedro de Ribera was architect of the Castillo di Bibataubin at Granada.

## Malagueña

upon the two stumps of his legs, and we know from his pigtail and his broad shoulders that he must be a picador who has been injured in a bull fight. The zapateado is to the rhythm of the cobbler's hammer, with quick tappings and hammerings in its beat. Or it may be the peteneras or the caracoles, to the snapping of the castanets or castanuelas, which are formed of ivory or of the wood of the passion flower, but the sound of which an old traveller from Holland compared to 'the clappers of the beggars in our country'. The caracoles are, of course, more lively or jumping in their rhythm. Siguiriyas, polos, martinetes, are sung in cante hondo. It is easy to recognize the malagueña or the seguidilla.

The malagueña, more level and in short, quick steps, a form or measure in itself and not depending upon the words, but brilliant and thrilling, as though we hear the tapping of the dancer's heels upon a surface that glitters, that has particles of mica, or flints out of which she strikes the sparks. Such is the malagueña, and it ends as brilliantly as it began. The seguidilla is more broken in rhythm, of older origin, and more inclining to the arabesque. Music of the town. Music, particularly, of the narrow, whitewashed alleys, coming from the doorway, or from the interior court. Music of a town of towers that, once, were minarets. We hear the clink of hooves upon the cobbles and the cry of the waterseller. After some preluding the clacking of the castanets begins, but at the ninth measure the dancers remain motionless and we only hear the grinding of the guitar. It is 'el bien parado', and the dancers, at the last note of the guitar, keep, as if petrified, to their positions, in catalepsis of the dance.

The tunes of the circus and the Spanish music hall begin. Half in parody upon themselves. The pasodoble that is nearly a burlesque, but in its savagery is more telling than the airs of the Gypsy suburbs, of Triana, Albaicín, or the Barrio de Santiago. Played upon brass bands, with that number of instruments which perform in the box at a bull fight, or could blare forth from a slow moving waggon or omnibus among the crowd. We are to imagine that the conductor of the band is, more often than not, the composer of these tunes, for which no law of copyright exists, so that they are altered or improved upon at will. The crowd motif in *Carmen* must have been of this origin, though improved upon by Bizet. It conveys, in itself, a picture of how the Spaniards walk or promenade in public. Of the characteristic strut of their shoulders and hips, particularly the poorer part of the population, and of which the sign is ineradicable among the Gitanos, who may be recognized from far off by their walk as they come in from their suburb of cave dwellings into the town. An electrical thrill of excitement, a shadow of impending bloodshed and tragedy are inherent in its rhythms. The tunes used by Chabrier in his *España* are of the same popular origin. For the, harmonically, more recondite forms of the Canto Flamenco are too remote for his immediate purpose. He has made use, therefore, of the semi-sophisticated airs of the café and the music hall, and seventeen of them, or their fragments, can be counted in *España*, a work which, when first heard, leaves a glittering impression that can never be forgotten.

## *The Estudiantina*

It is, of course, the miracle in such music that, in clever hands, it can be composed, as well, at home, without having been to Spain. The more subtle *Iberia* of Debussy is an instance of that; while he is said to have found inspiration for *Puerto del Vino*, one of the set of *Images* for piano, from a coloured picture postcard of Granada. But this only proves that it is a question of mood or of hallucination. In a moment, and by the mere turning of a knob, we may hear the tunes of Wembley and the Arsenal 'Big-Ben' is striking nine o'clock, there will be the news and a war commentary, another reading from the series 'Into Battle', and then dance music till midnight. Once more the stage army of the paseo de la cuadrilla is upon the march. We witness the entry of the bullfighters into the ring and their passage across it. Or we hear the mechanical pianos in the wineshops. Fifteen years ago you could hear these instruments from all along the street. And, at the corner, the syrinx of the knifegrinder.

The *estudiantina* whirls and preens. It is the Spanish waltz, in the Spanish idiom or convention. The difference between the Viennese and the Spanish waltz lies in the suggestion that the circles of the Viennese waltz expand outwards as do the ripples when a stone is dropped into a pond of water, while the Spanish waltz closes inward in rhythm. The Spanish rhythms contract and tighten, and perhaps this is characteristic of Spain and its inhabitants. Of the burnt chocolate flavoured with cinnamon that they drink for breakfast, in contrast to the Danubian coffee and whipped cream, of their late hours and midnight music halls, of the spectacles of the bull fight and the auto da fé, of the garrotting of their criminals, who are bound to a post, in sitting position, holding a crucifix in their hands, while, from the back, an iron collar is screwed tighter, tighter, upon their necks to strangle them, of the stiff hoop of the little *Infanta* and the napkin she is holding in her blue-veined hand.

The *estudiantina* has black jet and tortoiseshell for ornament, and its flower is the heliotrope. We do not say this arbitrarily, but the breath of it, if tunes have a scent, is the heliotrope. What are the flowers for the *cachuca*, *farruca*, or the slow *fandango*? Not the mauve heliotrope, which tells in the distance of Seville's towers, but as though they were a convention, like the fires of hell. Or they can be the belfries of Cadiz and its *miradors*. For it does not matter. We see and hear them all in the *estudiantina*.

## 4. Roses of Redouté

The striped roses are in flower. For two weeks only, and then the petals fall. But they shed some comfort while the sky darkens. Listen! listen! the machines have run beyond their masters. Is it because of the false gods that men have worshipped? For the humbler things have been obedient. It is as though they felt the warmth of brain and soul. This is their brief season. Come quickly, for it cannot last.

## *Rosa Mundi*

I first saw a striped rose growing in a long neglected garden. Near to a mulberry tree and a rustic arbour, into which you could hardly enter for the ivy. It was a place pregnant, for myself, with meaning because I used to walk there with my brother in the dread days before we returned to school. And there, as I have said, a striped rose was blooming, and I was told its name was York and Lancaster and that its history went back to the Wars of the Roses, and then, for our mutual sorrow, and from this association, we became the little princes in the Tower and would have welcomed death or any other fate that kept us back from school.

It may have been York and Lancaster or *Rosa Mundi*. I now think it was an old French rose. But *Rosa Mundi* is not less romantic in origin, if the legend could be true that says it was named after Fair Rosamund, the mistress of Henry II. Indeed, the story is so pretty that it seems perilous to enquire into it. But this is what we find. Fair Rosamund was the daughter of Walter, Lord Clifford of Hereford, and was at school at Godstow nunnery, whence she was removed by the King to the royal hunting lodge at Woodstock. Here he installed her in a bower or labyrinth. William Longespée, Earl of Salisbury, was their bastard son. After a time, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine forced her retirement into the nunnery at Godstow, where she died, and was buried under the high altar. Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, says the chronicler Stowe, came to Godstow and saw her tomb covered with a pall of silk and set about with wax lights, and they told him it was the tomb of Fair Rosamund, 'sometime leman to Henry II'. King John caused to be inscribed upon her tomb

\* *Hic jacet in Tumba, Rosa Mundi, non Rosa Munda  
Non redolet, sed olet, quae redolere solet*

while Leland, also, mentions her tomb with the inscription *Tumba Rosamundae*, and tells us that when it was opened 'a very sweet smell came out of it'. And there we must leave the legend of Fair Rosamund, near to the strawberry beds of Wytham, among the honeysuckle cottages and arbours, where, in happier times, were held the strawberry picnics, when strawberries were eaten out of clean white bowls, and heavy stemmed wine glasses were used to pound and crush them ready for the cream.

We can think of no experience more thrilling than to have spent an hour in an entire collection of these roses. If we could do so, it would not be to learn their names, but to see a whole acre blooming, and to let their particoloured markings create the period that gave them birth. To forget, for a while, the difficult and thorny present. And, indeed, it may not only be the sentiment that these are old roses with an ancient history that makes them to be fruitful of ideas, for there are not the same form or scent in modern roses.

Not every taste will admire the flaked or marbled flowers. For their broken colours are so gaudy. It is as when a troop of piebald ponies is seen grazing in a field and we are told they belong to Gypsies, or are circus ponies out at pasture for the summer.

## Striped Gallicas

However old York and Lancaster or *Rosa Mundi* may be, the former is described and illustrated by John Parkinson in his *Paradis in Sole Paradisus Terrestris*, 1627, while, of the latter, there is a drawing, dated 1640, in the collection of vellums at the *Jardin des Plantes*. And there is this difference between the two roses, that York and Lancaster is white, striped amaranth pink, whereas *Rosa Mundi* is pink, striped or flecked with brilliant carmine. Often they have been confused and wrongly named. York and Lancaster is a damask rose, and roses of Damascus are thought to have been brought into Europe by the Crusaders. The Damask roses are, at any rate, of Eastern descent. But *Rosa Mundi* is a Gallica, that is to say, a French or garden rose. And this is the origin that I should prefer for the striped rose that I saw growing, as a child.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, in France, there was a rage for the striped or variegated kinds of *Rosa Gallica*. Some of these particoloured roses may have come down from the French and Dutch rosarians of the eighteenth century, but the years 1820 to 1850 are the more likely date, and France can be set down, more probably, as their place of origin. Paris, that is to say, in the reigns of Charles X and Louis Philippe. The French nurseryman, Desportes, in his list of roses grown in France, mentions by name one thousand two hundred and thirteen different Gallicas. That was in 1829. Many striped flowers figure in this huge profusion, but all, or nearly all, are now forgotten. Identification is nearly impossible, and all we are left with is a list of names. But certain varieties had principal or primary markings to their petals, and a particular shape of flower or leaf. These can be recognized, and it is these that are still grown under their old names.

Such are the sorts that are to be found flowering in forgotten corners, and we will name a few of them. *Oeillet Parfait*, which is like an old carnation, a bizarre of white and crimson stripings, or *Perle des Panachées*, which is cream and rose. *Tricolore de Flandre*, white, red, and lilac, but like a camellia more than a carnation, and *Oeillet Flamande*, which is much the same. *Panachée Double*, striped in two kinds of purple, the *Belle des Jardins*, more elaborate still, for the underneath of the petals is another colour, and *La Plus Belle des Ponctuées*, which is of different design, for it is a striped or a dappled rose. There is, certainly, nothing of the Second Empire in *Oeillet Parfait* or *La Plus Belle des Ponctuées*. Or in the rose, striped white and scarlet, that grew below the red brick wall.

The striped roses which are purple or crimson, and have no white in them, are of another marbling. Their effect is more of damask, and perhaps it is an essential beauty in the piebald rose that it should have white in it. We prefer, in fact, *Oeillet Flamande*, or the *Tricolore de Flandre*, and their prototypes whose names have been forgotten. *Oeillet Parfait*, as we described it, is a flake carnation rose, and *La Plus Belle des Ponctuées* a *picotee*.

Many, many, varieties are lost. This rose, which I remember, will have been ordered from a nursery that had its stock from France. It is curious to think that its parent may have come, wrapped in moss, upon the

## *The carnation-rose*

Channel packet Perhaps from Antwerp, for there were famous growers in the Netherlands, like Van Houtte, who sent out Tricolore de Flandre in 1846. But there, too, they were in the shadow of French fashion. We have to deal with a distillation of the French taste and imagination. Probably they loved the striped roses because of their appearance of the Middle Ages, but, as in every revival, the soul is different and the heart is new.

Something in the structure of the petals makes the dead Gallicas to decay upon their stems in another way from most roses. They moulder like old honeycombs, it is a crumbling, a coagulation of their rounded heads, which are shorn and flattened but are, still, cells of sweetness. Perhaps we see them, thus, more often because the striped roses are so short of life. York and Lancaster, a Damask not a Gallica, dies a different death again, for the petals are shed from it at the first breath of wind. But the Gallicas droop to dust upon the bough, and seem to be enclosed within themselves in a husk or wrapping, that deteriorates, but keeps its shape. When they fall, the painted petals are thickly littered on the ground. What seems to make their colouring more than ever like a dye is the deepening of scarlet or crimson into purple, as the rose grows old. It can be, nearly, of Tyrian purple, or of rhodamine, and this relates the loose petals, aesthetically, to a greater antiquity than is the truth. In fact, the dying Gallicas could be the roses of the Roman feasts. It is because of their purple, but, if you pick up a petal from the ground, it is an old rose which will not flower again until another summer.

How beautiful are their names! It is of no use to contend that there is nothing in a name. L'Oeillet Parfait, La Perle des Panachées, Panachée Double, La Plus Belle des Ponctuées, there is, even, striped or variegated beauty in Le Tricolore de Flandre. We are to imagine that the rose growers were persons whose whole lives were devoted to that calling. If a rose grower presumed to name his flower La Perle des Panachées it was because he knew, familiarly, the twelve hundred and more Gallicas, and among those that were flamed or feathered could claim his was the most perfect in its markings. This rose is plumed, rose colour upon pale cream. La Plus Belle des Ponctuées must, also, have been superlative among the picotees, for if they grew carnations to be as round and full as roses, it was, also, a part of the florist's art to approximate the rose to the carnation or the pink. And lest it should be argued that it is spoiling a flower to make it look like another, there is this answer that the art of the florist had certain formal ideals or perfections, and that they considered progress to be an advance along parallel or formal lines. Perfection consisted, therefore, in a near approach to the ideal.

But we would return to the striped Gallicas as precursors or ensigns of the Romantic movement. A number of these roses, or such as were invented by that time, figure in the great work on roses by Redouté, and were grown in her rose garden at Malmaison by the Empress Josephine. For our purposes we would subtract out of the huge folios of Redouté such flowers as suit our present needs, choosing the striped Gallicas, the moss



## Cuisse de nymphe

and cabbage roses, and the sulphur rose because of its romantic history and its unique shape and colouring <sup>1</sup>

It was the period when a harp stood in the boudoir, and the long windows gave upon a river in a rocky bed down below the castle walls. Men wore square-ended boots which strapped or buttoned on to their trousers. The vignette of the women must have sleeves that are puffed out like leaves, and hair that is combed and brushed into a corolla. The world, in fact, of Achille Devéria. But it is unprofitable to mention names.

Instead, let us turn to the *Rosa Prolifera* of Redouté, a *Centifolia*, or cabbage, and to my mind, in scent and texture, the most beautiful of all roses. Often, it bears another flower in the centre of the blossom. In the early morning, when wet with dew, this rose is a sensation too beautiful to be described. The drops of moisture, which, in themselves, are scented rose water, are from the brush of de Heem or Van Huysum, and the leaves are wet and aromatic. But the scent! As we draw in our breath, the sensation is animal, as of a lovely skin, as of awakening in Cytherea, the isle of Venus, where the rose-hung galleon lies in to shore.

## 5. The Golden Reign of Saturn

Look! and you will behold the pressing of the grapes. It is a morning and evening in the golden reign of Saturn. For the god has been made partner on the throne and teaches mankind agriculture and the useful and liberal arts.

It is, at the same time, Noah's vintage, but not the drunkenness of Noah. We shall hear silvery, captivating laughter.

Dawn comes with the face of an angel in the doorway.

Wooden shutters are wide open and the upper rooms are full of light. It has already touched the towers or little walled towns upon the hills. Certain houses, too, here and there in the landscape, that must be farms, and have walls of pink or white or blue, and near by, long granaries or winecellars. It is so early that the waggons are still in their sheds. The milk white oxen are in their stalls. In the distance it could still be moonlight in the wooded valleys. For there is shade everywhere, and the trees are the cypress and stone pine.

A woman passes the doorway in a long gown that flutters to her bare

<sup>1</sup> At a time when the yellow rose was unknown in Europe, the sixteenth century German botanist, Clusius, saw the representation of such a flower upon a Moghul jewel cabinet, of the sort in which the top surface represents a miniature garden, with model flowers laid out in patterns, while the formal beds are divided by strips of mirror, to represent canals, upon which the figures of fishes and ducks are engraved or painted. This kindled the curiosity of Clusius, and at length, after many years, his agent at Constantinople procured a yellow rose for him, from India, which is the sulphur rose, *R. hemispherica*, scentless, but of unique beauty.

## *Young Tobias*

feet, holding an amphora upon her head, and leading by the hand a child, like Tobias, with round face and a golden head of curls. Noiselessly, they go down an outside staircase into the flowers.

When you put your hand upon the windowsill it is already warm, but the nightingales are still singing in the little wood.

Ah! that was the wind among the cypress stems

It is the ninth month. Purses of gold hang upon the fig tree, under the heavy leaves. Not the early, small fruits, but luscious figs of autumn, green or purple, with split sides of gum or honey, where the striped wasp works among the grains of seed. The shadow of the loaded fig tree is the first shadow of the morning. Upon a white wall where, like the ghost of a pastoral god, there hang a pair of reed slippers and a widebrimmed hat of straw

Or is it a scarecrow to put among the vines? A straw figure to carry there, that will keep the birds from pecking at the grapes? A god of the corn straws, planted from rye or barley, or the rougher oats, but, now so many grapes are picked, humiliated and thrown away? We shall see women in those widebrimmed hats treading in the winepress.

We could call it, to this moment, the honeysuckle morning, for it smells of wild honeysuckle where the doves are calling.

Tobias and his mother are in the flowering meadow, for in this innocence of the world the autumn morning is as fresh as spring. He holds a blue cornflower in his infant hand. We watch them from the window, while we hear water coming up from the cold well, and see the virgins at the fountain who fill an amphora, and lift it to their heads, and walk away.

There are light movements of the morning clouds, it is so early yet. The regent Saturn must lie, still, abed.

Vesta, the evening star, sleeps low down in the heavens above the western hills. She is his wife, goddess of fire, and patroness of the virgins.

But she reigns on earth, too, and is awake, and gives her orders.

Linen is spread out to dry upon the cypress hedges, which are still warm from yesterday. You can smell the cypress wood. Other women are carrying armfuls of hay into the mangers, and watering the oxen. The geese are cackling and someone must be feeding them.

There are always geese where there are virgins, at ever a goosegirl.

With bright wings the painted doves come down. Tobias feeds a pretty bullfinch, but holds to his mother by the other hand.

It is the hour to eat, now that the creatures have been fed. Figs and pomegranates of the night's ripening, and a pitcher of spring water, in a long room with a high ceiling and noble doors, like the doorways of temples, and ornamented in that manner with cupids and medallions. The walls are left bare, and there is no other furniture than an enormous table. In a few moments the meal is done.

A toad, with hidden ruby in its head, jumps from a leaf into the snapdragons and is lost among their mouths of flame. Nothing in this lovely morning is too little or humble to be noticed. The firefly in a dark corner

## *The head of Holofernes*

of the wall that lights and extinguishes her lantern, oblivious of the day. Not contented like the evening star After a summer night there are always one or two such, foolish virgins, stragglers from the dark The lichen on the outside walls grows in parhelions, in leopard markings, upon the stone Feel it, and you will know how hot it is to be! The lizard already crawls upon the plaster

Tobias comes past with a baby rabbit in his arms

The god is awake and dresses in his bedroom They bring him a calendar of all the husbandmen A moth flutters its wings behind the wooden shutters His Molossian hound laps milk up from a saucer, and licks his master's hand

The serious work of the morning is to begin But the kingdom of Saturn is this valley and one to either hand, for as far as the eyes can see, and no further Wherever we chance to be So that, in a sense, it is universal, but it is as though he visits one part of the world after another, in rotation of the seasons, and in this way it is timeless, and the centuries go by

Old men can remember the beginning of this golden age How slow their lives have gone! The dandelion has come up again His, too, is a kind of golden reign, though we shall all live to see his hair and beard go white Saturn? No! his is a timeless, measureless middle age, and he will grow no older But he comes down the stair with the same step that he will tread into the sapphire evening For, in fact, he has come down among the flowers

Now the slow progress begins, and men and women climb into the waggons Upon both sides of the street there are houses with stone doors and carved windows A peacock on a window ledge calls out with Indian cry, and there are butterflies that hover upon the flowering weeds that grow out of the walls

It is a pastoral triumph to move at this slow pace with the milk white oxen by the houses into the deep fields of September We advance with the milky dewlap through this hush or lull of early morning There is a haze of heat, and no other sound but the cry of the cicadas and the creaking of the wheels

The god is in a blue gown tucked up above his knees, and his face is shaded by a widebrimmed hat

Down lanes between the olive trees more waggons are coming Wherever we look, a milky dewlap breasts the flowers and horns of plenty, hung with garlands, point the way To Noah's winepress It is not even he reign of two different religions, ruling side by side, but the old men of the winepress have such long white beards They are patriarchs, husbandmen of the Pentateuch, in enjoyment of the promised land A pair of them have come back carrying a bunch of grapes from a pole across their shoulders It weighed heavier than the head of Holofernes They could scarcely lift it

All these are but nicknames The only truth is in the golden reign of Saturn

## *Pagan marriage bed*

The winepress is in a well known place. There is an arcade or trellis of three pairs of wooden columns, with a wooden beam connecting them, and beams along each side in order to complete the framework. As simple as that. The wood is grained and squared as it would be used to lay the roofs of houses. But the timbers are festooned with vines. It is an open building with a roof of vines. The stems climb up the pillars and the grapes hang down from the rafters, but not so as to interrupt the view.

For it is open to the landscape in all directions, except to one side where there stands a group of buildings, the summer pavilion of Noah in a light and fanciful architecture. But, in fact, houses and little palaces of this character stand on all the tufted hills. It is the whole kingdom at a glance. The capital cities can be seen between the pillars of this pergola, and castles and distant villages where you might lean your arm upon a pillar. Look at the cypress spire beside the window!

The god and his court get down from the waggon and tuck up their dresses and begin to tread. The grapes are handed down to them in baskets, and it is the men who stand upon the ladders, and reach up to the grapes and break them from their stems.

It is a morning of summer intimacy with the god who is a husbandman. Not more than six or seven persons are working with him. A pair of maidens, on the left, in long fluttering dresses, have the baskets heaped with grapes upon their heads, but they differ in their attitudes and in the colour of their gowns, which are all of one piece in ribs and folds, or have a peasant apron round the waist and a skirt which is lighter in colour than the bodice. One girl, moreover, is not ready, yet, for her journey to the winepress. Her basket is not quite full. It is being loaded by the man upon the ladder, and she looks up at him, so that she is standing still, while the other maiden dances towards the sea of grapes. This, in allegory, for she is the outer of the pair of virgins, but she will dance to the edge of it and empty her basket into the winepress.

The god is stained purple up to his thighs. And now a maiden, lifting her skirt in order to fold it half-way above her knees, climbs into the winepress with him. It is as though a virgin climbed into the marriage bed, but the rites are pagan or wanton because of her smile. There is no weeping. An action which we see, behind her figure, is a corroboration that this is a morning and evening of laughter under the vines. For, standing under the far ladder, an old woman in a peasant dress holds up her apron for the grapes, while a young man, who must be her son, plucks the fruit in such an attitude that he could be one of the figures from the Deposition, about to lower the body of one of the two thieves from the cross. It is a familiar or sacred reminiscence, but no more than that. What she is receiving in her apron is the body of the grapes. She has not to turn back the sheets, and stand at the bedfoot, and urge the maiden forward into the bridegroom's arms. Instead, we hear laughter and the treading into wine.

She climbs out, and another maiden jumps into the grapes. The winepress is fed continually, as they come and pour their baskets into it, and go for more. The juice has splashed upon the earth. It is not as when the

## *The cloud motif*

yew tree stems are red after the rain That is the red of flesh. This is the blood of grapes, and the grapeskins are trodden into it. Their torn integument must be drained or filtered to the bottom of the winepress, where it will form the lees or dregs of wine

They lift their feet high in order to stamp upon the grapes This is not the treading of damp linen in the river bed, when the washing is spread out upon the rocks to dry, and the arbutus and the oleander are in flower It is a miracle, a liquefaction It is generous, and it stains or dyes with much frothing It is the grapes' blood, troubled and whipped up into a foam, but it does not spill like blood For it is a flowering, and not an agony The train of ants wade in and out of it, the wasps drink, too, and know the holy stupor, only the butterfly, that has no work to do and is mistress of her hours, pauses a moment and passes by So that, in nature, it is the industrious that know the intoxication of the grape

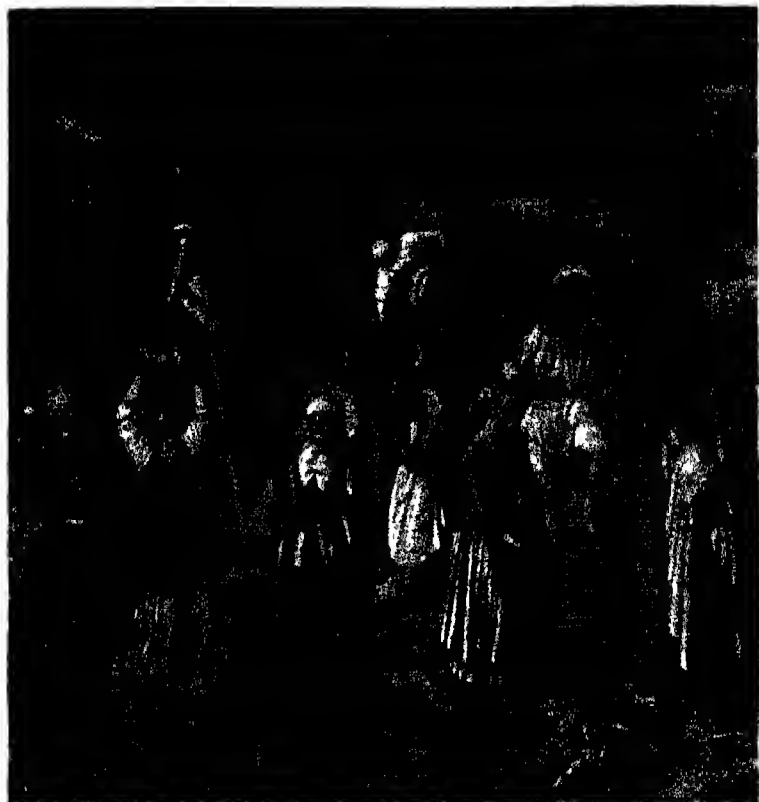
All the morning the treading of the wine goes on There are persons standing in the windows who call down to them and bring, from time to time, well water in a pitcher with which they slake their thirst The god himself, in grapes up to his thighs, takes the amphora in both hands, and leans back his head to drink The others drink, too, in the shadow of the vines It draws near to noon

Then, you would find Saturn sleeping with his back against a wall Ah! to see a god asleep in the sun, like any husbandman, still holding a crust of bread in his hand! To see the shadow of a god slant down the wall, and break upon the ground, and reach to the foot of the vine! This person who is sleeping in the middle of the day is one of the lights of the heavens, meaning all or nothing The others lie round him, but the maidens are too young to be asleep during the day They whisper together, and tell stories to Tobias All of nature sleeps except the dragonfly

But the god wakes and sleepily, sleepily, joins in their talk He comes back to earth out of the heavens

Now the maidens wrap their skirts round their legs, and work begins. They measure how much wine has been pressed and step down into the grapes But the afternoon goes more quickly than the morning It is not long before a wind, but you could hardly call it that, blows down into this airy architecture Clouds are ascending and descending upon the hills and their effect is like the stops of an organ or distant scales of music, for this pillared building has been designed in the manner of those seashells that keep the noise of the sea in them Its purpose is for coolness A gentle wind blows round the pillars and upon the pergola of vines It is a wind from the sea But in the late afternoon it is lifted away as suddenly as it began

And the treading of the grapes is nearly done The women, now, take their turn upon the ladders, climbing a rung or two higher than did the men, and reaching for the difficult bunches high up, hidden in the top-most leaves It is a ravishment to watch a pair of grape pickers, carried, each on her ladder, by two husbandmen, for they recover their balance and come down the rungs, holding each bunch as though it were a lovely



NOAH'S VINTAGE  
from the fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo at Pisa





THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH  
from the fresco by Orcagna in the Campo Santo at Pisa





## *The tumbrel*

head held up by its hair, and give it into the hands of the vintagers, and go up again for more. It is in parallel to the ascending and descending of the clouds upon the hills, while the lifting of them, as though they were dancers, and the repetition of their attitudes, only in another place of light and shadow under the leaves, makes the human beauty of the grape harvest. They ascend and descend their ladders under the eyes of Saturn, who is watching. Or it is, at the same time, Noah's vintage.

The evening is at its most lovely moment. All the towns upon the hills are to be seen in detail. There are even, in the distance, other wine-presses, but without the god. Yet we hear voices and laughter. Their maidens are as though dancing. We even see the air fluttering through their pleated dresses as they carry the full baskets upon their heads, and pour the grapes into the winepress. We can apprehend the rhythm as they stamp the grapes, lifting their feet and treading the ripe clusters into wine. Into young wine, which has to ferment and gather strength. It would be no exaggeration to say that there is this ceremonial dance through all the landscape, wherever we see a vineyard, while, somehow, the adolescence of the world and its cruel innocence are inherent in the architecture of the little towns and castles that stand upon the hills. There is no decay. The buildings are entirely new. They portray, nevertheless, a golden age within a golden age. That is to say, there are classical columns and porticos, domes of Halicarnassus, the fantasies of a child of fifteen who reads Virgil and Livy under the pomegranates and stone pines.

But we come to the tasting of the wine. They dip their pitchers into the winepress and lift them, brimming over, to their lips. The maidens but taste it, and Tobias is given a sip of it, but the husbandmen slake their throats, and talk of last year's vintage and the year before. For their wine does not keep long. Enough is pressed for their needs, and they drink it at a year old, storing it in wooden casks below the pillared granary, in the next cellar to the oil press where they crush the olives. Next door to the stable of the milk white oxen.

How beautiful to stand in the doorway of travertine, which is warm to touch, and look down the valley to the blue mountains in the distance! There is always snow upon them, even in the summer. Down the valley, with ten thousand poplars along the river bed, and no towns or castles in this direction, but innumerable little farms and houses all the way to the foothills. It is lovely in the month of the blue iris, in the month of roses, in the season of oleanders, through high August when it thunders, and now in the month of grapes. The wheels of the ox waggons are stained purple, not flashing wet, as though at the fording of a stream among the banks of pebbles, but a musty, dark discoloration which is the dye of the grapeskin. The floors and sides of the waggons are dyed purple with it, for these are the tumbrels of the winepress. They bring home the body of the god who has been sacrificed. At this moment they are yoking the white oxen.

Old women sit at the doors of their houses, plaiting straw. The creaking

## *Virgin of the snowball*

of wheels can be heard on the ridge of the hill, among the olive trees, and they turn the corner and come down the road. How lazily the oxen move! It is slower than a walking pace. Two by two, they plod down past the cypresses. Men and women, all, wear the widebrimmed hats of straw, for the setting sun is in their eyes. The blue gown of Saturn is stained a deeper colour, but he still wears the fillet in his hair. Here, they get down from the tumbrils, here the landscape, and what happens are of our own inspiration.

They are lost in the labyrinth. For it deepens into a starlit night under the constellations, fixed or moving. Silvery, captivating laughter comes from the maidens. Of golden innocence, before the golden bowl is broken. Or they are the rings of Saturn, who dance round him in the fields of heaven. Of no more substance than the rainbow in a flashing fountain? Or are they fugal bands and choirs, for they move in their appointed measures? In our ears it is innocent laughter. The maidens at the wine-press are the youth and beauty of the Quattrocento, of a time when we are persuaded the painter's hand could not go wrong.

What we have been describing are the frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-1497), in the Campo Santo at Pisa. It has been a morning and evening in the manner of Benozzo. Noah's vintage, or, rather, the golden reign of Saturn, for it has been an experiment in his manner, but beyond his boundaries, though not in intention, for Benozzo meant his buildings to be pagan, but his landscape and architecture are of the age of innocence. No picture of the innocence of the world is complete without them. Just as no vision of the heavens is perfect that does not mention Fra Angelico, his master.

What are we to think of this primitive world of the Italians? When they had broken the shackles of the golden background? Or were half emerged from it? We hear silvery laughter, high up, under the tower. They are playing upon early instruments. An archaic music. It is a mime upon the legend of the Virgin and the snowballs. The Virgin had appeared upon the same night to Johannes, a Roman patrician, and to Pope Liberius, commanding them to build a church to her upon the spot where they should find snow upon the next morning, August 5th. Hence, the Roman basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, and the little chapel of Santa Maria delle Nevi, in Siena, with its altar painting by Matteo di Giovanni. The Madonna is enthroned with saints at her side, and angels who hold snowballs in their hands. Now, indeed, we hear silvery, captivating laughter.

We could make a study of the mannerisms of the Sienese painters. Of Vecchietta, who might have lived among the Buddhist monks of Nara, of Sassetta, who in his paintings of the Franciscan legends hints at a world in which worship of St Francis had supplanted that of Christ, of Giovanni di Paolo, with his fish maidens in long gowns that touch the flowers, clasping each other's hands in a paradise of fruit trees. A whole study, even, could be devoted to the Tavolette, which are the covers of the municipal tax registers of Siena. They are painted with heraldry, with

## *Francesco di Giorgio*

portraits, and with episodes from sacred or profane history, by Matteo di Giovanni, Francesco di Giorgio, Giovanni di Paolo, and above all, Sano di Pietro.

We could write of the miracles of San Bernardino, after the manner of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. There are eight panels, in Perugia, of his young popinjays strutting in fantastic, rocky landscapes. Pinnacles of rock, and rocky arches, as artificial as though cast in lava, with a lake, perhaps Lake Trasimene, seen in the distance, and many poplars. Or it is possible that these panels, which are so personal in style, are a composite work by Fiorenzo, Pinturicchio, Perugino, and Francesco di Giorgio.

But, in fact, it would be necessary to have different days or years for Francesco di Giorgio, who was painter, architect, and engineer, expert in the Italian military science of the fifteenth century. Brand new fortifications stand upon the hill tops, and the plain brick or stone, cut in diamonds, is background for men dressed in steel by the armourers of Brescia or Milan. The entrance to the fort is through a classical archway, which is incongruous, but the heat and glare are that of a red brick town in August, with the site prepared for an equestrian statue in the square. Noise is incessant, and it is impossible to get to sleep. Because of this, dawn is exaggerated, as though it pains the eyes to look at it.

The lifting of the shadows is like a lesson in geometry. It follows the laws of perspective down the colonnades. The red ball of fire comes up out of the Lombard plain, and plays a game with the long rows of arches, with the star bastions and deep dug moats. Every tree has been cut down so as to make a clear field for the artillery, and the only shadows are those of buildings or of persons. But some of the fortifications are in false perspective. Down at the far end the arches do not diminish, but grow bigger. And there are dummies, like tailors' models, seated in the square, with hands upon their laps, and no head at all, or a stuffed globe that is inclined to one side as though in thought. Mere schemes for statuary, but the dummies are more mysterious in personality than the finished statue, and brood upon the architecture as though its strict geometry has meaning for them. Instead of features, curious dotted lines are drawn upon their faces, as though they are the globes of a phrenologist, which are blank and expressionless, but have the areas of thought and emotion marked upon them. One is covered, all except the head, with sackcloth, and would seem to be a priest or neuter being in contemplation.

We see a fortified bridge, like that of Verona across the Adige. It is a battlemented, brick tunnel over the swift flowing river. Or we could paint the Adriatic sea, between the columns, for a fourth wall. We are anywhere, in the red brick tyrannies, under a despot or condottiere. Like wasps, his men come out of their hives, and pick up their halberds. The pawns are directed, as in a game of chess, from square to square of black and white. It makes a hundred shadows along the empty piazza. A piebald stallion is led out of an archway, and a wooden hobbyhorse is dragged into the sun. In a corner they practise the swirling of the banners. There are stone cannon balls heaped into pyramids, and the tambour and the drum.

## *The Spanish chapel*

How hot it has grown upon this shadeless hill! The clouds have become pagan goddesses. Look down into the sea, and you will behold the leaping of the dolphin! After a while, the evening begins, with the same laws of geometry in cancrizans or retrogression, for the shadows point backward, in the opposite direction. The goddess of night shows in the heavens, and, could we stay till then, we should hear the changing of the guard at midnight, and the challenge of the partisans in a square of moonlight.

We know, too, that we could write of a morning and an evening in many other manners. In the style of the frescoes of the Schifanoia by Francesco Cossa of Ferrara, giving the employment of the months and the life of Borso d'Este. Above are the gods of the months in triumphal chariots. Below are the signs of the zodiac. We could recreate the frescoes of Cosima Tura that have been destroyed. His dolphin curves, or the burning, dry desert rocks of Ercole de' Roberti can become an obsession with those who are addicted to him.

Dawn in the manner of Paolo Uccello would be no less dramatic than his battle of Sant' Egidio. Dawn when the sun and moon are both shining in the sky, as their beams mingle and interpenetrate in the fragrant pine-wood, and the land is tilled in long stripes and in terraces. Or there is the landscape of Alessio Baldovinetti with the hills and little trees that are peculiar to him.

We could write of the great paintings in the Spanish chapel of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence. It is a place familiar to ourselves since early childhood. We have stood there on wet days, with the sound of the rain pouring down into the cloister, and looked up at the painted walls and the four triangular frescoes of the vaulted ceiling in all the disappointment of a rainy day in Florence with nowhere else to go except the soaking streets. During empty August it is not less tremendous, and in a sense anonymous. This frescoed chapter house is the work of Andrea da Firenze, painted about 1370. The two greatest of the wall paintings depict the Church Militant and Triumphant, and the Glorification of the Dominican St Thomas Aquinas, for the church and monastery of Santa Maria Novella are Dominican. In the Church Militant and Triumphant the Pope and the Emperor are enthroned, side by side, with priests and monks and hermits round them. In another corner of this crowded fresco some young men and women are wasting the hours in an orange grove. A full account of the paintings, in detail, would be impossible in these pages. We can only note the strange currents of fanaticism. The black and white dogs, *Domini canes*, for the Dominicans, the hermits, particularly, in the Church Militant and Triumphant, or the strange figure, listening, in the ceiling fresco of the Pentecost. Below the feet of St Thomas Aquinas, in his Glorification, are the three heretics, Arius, Sabellius, and Averrhoes, below them, a row of fourteen women, who are the arts and sciences, seated upon thrones that are like choir stalls, and at their feet, as many male figures chosen from among those who were famous in that science or theology. These are most curious. Practical theology with Peter Lombard; Speculative theology with Dionysius the

## *The Triumph of Death*

Areopagite, Demonstrative theology with Boethius, Mystic and Scholastic theologies with St Augustine and St John Damascene, Grammar with Priscian, but, above all, music with Tubalcain. This fanatic with his dark beard could be a Gypsy blacksmith, without his anvil, listening to music, and in a rhapsodic trance. Where can Andrea da Firenze have met with his prototype? It is a figure that haunts the memory and is for evermore a symbol for one half of music. Behind him, his muse plays a stringed instrument, and he is listening to her. Yes! it is, perhaps, more wonderful to stand here in hot August than on a rainy day, for it is cool and empty in the great chapter house and we can pick out the figures of fanatics and heretics. We see Averrhoes in his turban, and Tubalcain like a wild animal entranced by music. These paintings were beautiful, once they are still beautiful but they have been sullied. The foul breath of politics has smirched them. It is not enough that the tramlines run in the street outside that every door has been numbered that the custodian sits there, like Charon, upon the shores of the dead. When it is done the hour will be late. And they are fading fast upon their plaster. No one will be interested. But few will know these names. There will be different problems another future, and another past. An old music hall song will have more importance than an early painting. For there will be no more aesthetes. Those who can travel will not go to Italy. And the ghosts have fled from Paris.

Yet we cannot let it die as easily as that. What was that? It is dying, dying dead already. Here is the Triumph of Death, painted six hundred years ago. Who has not seen lords and ladies in their green hoods growing in the woods? And now we can make out upon the plaster the hunting party riding to the chase. Ten of them, knights and countesses, or princesses, with fine sleeves, and hats of different forms that take one back through the centuries. We see their pointed shoes in the stirrups, and from steed to steed, hats that rise like crowns from a coronet, that are wrapped or folded, with a long edge falling nearly to the shoulder, an older man with a beard, a guest from the Orient, who is staying in the castle, with a high hat of fur like that worn by the boyars, next to him, a felt hat shaped like that of the Eastern Basileus, with crown and brim of different colours, worn by a young knight, behind, a pair of ladies in peaked hats and wimples, which show their youthful faces, then, another beauty who turns in her saddle to talk to the last knight of all, riding out of the wood. Below, a huntsman on foot, in striped dress, with long hair, in a peaked hat of long dead fashion, holding back a hound.

But the whole party have reined in their horses. And the horses are rearing back, arching their necks, except one which cranes forward with its head nearly to the ground so that its rider has to stand back in his stirrups. The young knight, behind him, leans forward in his saddle and looks down. He is the youngest and most handsome of the knights, and suddenly, he comes face to face with death. In that moment it is upon them all. The smell of death. A corruption, a sickly sweetness, worse than the rotting stunkball in the damp place in the woods. All living creatures

## *The wings of death*

know, by instinct, what it means One of the long gownned princesses leans her head and weeps, but her knight, who has fought in battles, is more curious and looks down, but holds his nose What they see are three bodies of kings, in open coffins, in different stages of decay One is still recognizable, fearfully swollen, but still in the pose of its last agony which no skill could alter Another has sunk down in viscous, furry sleep, lying in a film or blurr or efflorescence of corruption, having gone back to the ape in its white shroud The last is but a skeleton, but with one hand to its skull The long bony shanks of it are knock-kneed and bare of any covering Its bony head looks, not at the hunting party, but on ourselves, in warning All are horrified, for a moment, but pass on

A path, which is a rocky ledge, winds upward and the hermit Macarius, old and bowed, stands in their way with a long scroll of writing that is a written warning Above is the chapel of the anchorites, and a deer and a rabbit and a cock pheasant run in safety from the huntsmen The other hermits have come out upon the mountain

The far side of this huge composition is another orange grove with cupids, or they could be angels, flying among the boughs Music and poetry and love are to be seen, but the pestilence is coming Death must have the smell of the orange wood in her nostrils She is an old woman with long, straight hair, winged and clawed like a harpy, wearing a robe of wire, and with her scythe held in both hands Death comes down upon them like the plague, while the heavens are full with wings of demons and angels making off with the souls of the wicked and the saved, all in the form of infants that are issuing from a heap of corpses In this pile of bodies thrown down, helter skelter, in the charnel pit there are kings and queens, bishops and cardinals, court ladies with the linen wimple tying up their jaws, young persons of both sexes who died in youth It has come to them, and gone past them

But, in the middle, there are those who want to die Many blind or crippled beggars, and those in mortal pain Their hands are outstretched towards her, and they are whining or muttering to be allowed to die A horrid, crouching figure of a man in a black cap, with lank hair, leaning on a stick, with his beggar's purse hanging from his belt, leaning forward and pointing with his hand as though it is his habit Someone behind him, with contorted features, swathed and swathed in dirty bandages A sitting figure, who cannot walk or stand, with a deformed and twisted foot In front, one of the blind beggars with mutilated limbs, who can only crawl forward by means of a wooden implement in each hand, shaped like a wooden flat iron He comes, clapper clapper, along the dust Behind him, a terrible creature blind from birth, makes no gesture, but grips his ragged staff All are cursing as they hear the wings go over them We can smell their beggars' gowns, living and foetid, not like dead men's clothes But Death does not heed them They are to continue in their living purgatory

No one knows who was the master of this painting Vasari ascribes it to Andrea Orcagna, other authorities to the brothers Lorenzetti, or to Fran-

## *Coming of the Messiah*

cesco Traini, a Pisan painter. It is anonymous, like the frescoes in the Spanish chapel of Santa Maria Novella, but more tremendous still. And, because it is anonymous, it is abstracted from all other association that comes from any knowledge of the painter, or his works, and it exists in a corner of its cloister where the hunting party riding to the chase, night and day for six hundred years, are, suddenly, face to face with death. Death is in front of them, and behind them, having passed the beggars by. All who have seen this terrific relic from the Middle Ages must be affected by it in the same way as though they had been brought face to face with a fearful motor accident upon the road. The ladies and cavaliers are spectators, too. It is an experience which we share with them. They will return home to the castle in the evening. The horses will be stabled, and they will climb up the winding stair into their rooms. A maid will lift off the ladies' hats and unfold their wimples. Water will be poured over their hands out of a metal ewer. We should see a cupboard full of pointed shoes, and hear one lady speak to another in a language that we scarcely understand. They are princesses, and you must hold the door open for them, and bow as they go past. Here they come again, riding to the hunt. It is a perpetual courting between these cavaliers and their ladies. They have been spared by death.

What of the living, and of their future? When the winds die down and the mowing with the scythe is done. The golden reign of Saturn may be attempted in a hundred places and will fail in all. It is because there is no god to come down upon the earth. Circumstances have turned against it. When all men and women are to wear ready made shoes and utility clothing, there is no place for the sandal. For he could not be as all other men. Already, he will have been for some years in one of the fighting services. Or in munitions. His identity card should have a particular number stamped in the right hand corner. But no! Has he been in prison under para 18 B? The authorities know all about him. And they do not consider he is a particularly desirable person. Because he refuses to give the name of his next-of-kin, when registering. Ah well! it is better to be as all other men. In case there should be an identity parade? With what accent would you have him speak? Like that of one of the announcers on the radio, the croupiers of the news? They are sinless and incorruptible.

Might the great thaumaturge begin by curing the common cold or is that beneath his powers? What about a column for him in the daily press? And a rally at the Albert Hall, if it is still standing. On a day between a performance of Hiawatha and a boxing match. Is it not more probable that no one will have heard of him? He lived in our midst and nobody suspected him. He has been seen in the Reading Room of the British Museum, that is certain, and must have signed the register. And walked out of the portico, down the steps, with the Waverley Hotel in front of him. He wandered away into Bloomsbury towards the Underground. Perhaps he has a black face, and comes from the Gold Coast, or is an Indian.



## *Reign of Comus*

It should be possible to find his landlady Not far from Mornington Crescent, do you think? And he will have had a favourite tea-room A non-smoker, teetotaler, and vegetarian, for it is a short cut to set yourself apart by diet Upon a summer day, by omnibus, all the way to Golders Green, past the crematorium, while a wisp of smoke rises into the bright air above the roofs of the villas, and the lilac is in flower To Welwyn Garden City and the Express Dairy To the new soda fountain To the cinema with its seats of sham tigerskin

Ah! all that was just before the war began Now Mars is reigning Do the gods rule by rotation? Twice, in our lifetime, Mars has come upon the earth What god was reigning in between the wars? Could it have been Comus, the god of revelry and nocturnal entertainments? We are told that during his festivals men and women exchanged each other's dresses He was represented with a torch in his hand, which seemed falling, and was more generally seen sleeping upon his legs, and turning himself when the heat of the falling torch seemed about to scorch his side Or perhaps there was no god at all, and it was an interregnum And now there is to be austerity, but it will be godless, also, and, therefore, the fasting will be in vain

# PART TWO

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## Book Five

### BATTLE IN THE STEPPE

**L**isten! listen again! Did you hear nothing? Now again! Then, then! Could you not hear it? It was quite distinct. And again. Ah! that was but a shooting star. It must be the battle many hundreds of miles away, in the cornlands of black earth. During all August, which is the month of harvest. Along the plains of Tanais. It is where the world will be lost or won. In the name of what god? Ah! do not ask. It is enough to watch the battle.

Did you see another star fall out of the heavens? Noiselessly, without a sound.

We will suppose there is wanton moonlight, for it is full moon. The moon of the barcarolle. But this is the lantern held up in the murderer's hand. The lit candle stuck by its end upon the mantelpiece, until the deed is done, and found there in the fearful morning, fallen into the ashes of the grate. Among the burnt matches and the stumps of cigarettes.

The whole battle is in monstrous parody upon the harvest. It has continued all night long, but we will meet it at the morning. There are chained lights, or at least they hang in chains, that float in the heavens, and come slowly down. And red flares. And moths that court the flames. The night must be weary with the noise of wings. And there is the beating of the flail, as well. The cranking, cranking of the caterpillar that crawls upon the leaf, but never turns into a butterfly. That is the panzer column. Where are the spearheads? They have eaten deep into the harvest. They have cut lanes that lead for miles and miles.

Lie down and hide! Lie flat! First comes the shadow, but it has gone by. The moon is yellow as barley sugar, immense and doltish, like a rural comedy, and leaning on one side. The most perfect weather in memory for the cutting of the corn. Surely you heard that? But it was far away and will not come in our direction. The plain is so immense, between the Dnieper and the Don, that they are harvesting in certain places. And the battle, and the harvest, are in parody upon each other. For the cornstooks are tied like prisoners, in bundles, hand and foot. They take the form, too, of a line of tents. It is curious to watch the sorting of the corn sheaves, for they are laid out, like wounded, upon the ground while one harvester attends to a whole row of them. Where we find them kneeling, to tie up the sheaves, it would seem sometimes, from their attitudes, that they are lifting in their arms a god of reeds or straw, or some fantastic headdress. Behind them, stands the golden honeycomb, just as though a spoon had cut into the cells. A spoon, but not a knife, for it is not as sharp as that. The cells are still brimming over. They cloy with sweetness, and you could count the drooping heads of rye.

## *Collective farms*

It is waist high, and thick as honey, and, elsewhere, dead, or stacked upon the ground. Some of the husbandmen are sitting on the bundles while they eat their breakfast. But stand them on end, tie their necks with a rope of straw, and they are the cornstooks of the harvest. Of three armfuls, each, with a space of light between, just like the door of a tent or, for that matter, of a house of cards. Yes. They are straw houses. Uninhabited. It is a kind of children's game. They have pitched these tents, in make believe. One after another, unnecessarily. It is a needless slaughter. As much so as when holiday makers, young men and women from the town, raid the spring woods, and come back with bunches of bluebells, roots and all, tied to their bicycles.

One or two persons come, walking slowly, hidden to their shoulders up the lanes of corn. They are carrying cornstooks upon their backs, and go, one behind another, like masquers in heavy costumes, or as though they are carrying dead men of straw. Back to back. The dead man's head and face are behind the living head. What is the meaning of this? Is it that, Janus-like, they know the past and future, and, as harvesters, open the day with the sun and close it at his setting? A covey of partridges, with whirring wings, rises out of the corn. And, at the side, a hare runs this way and that, and doubles on its traces. Poppies and cornflowers are in bloom, but in the golden underworld below the heads of oats or rye.

There are cliffs and sudden segments in the corn. It rises steeply, for no reason, as if at a tumulus, or tomb mound in the plain. Then we get curves and softness, like the clipping of a horse's mane, as it climbs and comes up, and is level on the summit, makes an edge against the landscape, and drops down again. Indeed, a whole section of the uncut corn, solid, like golden bread or golden honeycomb, has been left till last. In its shade, for it has a shade, the husbandmen are resting. But there are one or two who cannot stay their hands, and go on reaping.

Away, in the distance, are the collective farms. The motor tractors are at work. We hear them, up and down the cornland, binding as they go. But the country is so immense that they are lost to sight in it, and we have to look for them until they turn and come reaping in our way. Then, it is slow, and takes the corners carefully and we hear the motor louder, at times, just as though it was a paddle steamer lifting on the waves. Long white buildings, far away, are where the workers live and sleep. They are not dressed as peasants, but men and women alike, as dancers in the rehearsal room.

From every point of the horizon there comes the noise of motor engines. Far and near, but more generally, invisible. Therefore, this primitive harvest is but a vision or hallucination. But we shall see that the machines are at war with one another. In pursuit and they will pass by the dolt who walks on foot. We are hidden here. Lie down and keep low! It has gone by as swiftly as the swallow. The husbandmen still eat their bread and honey. And in the ghostly dawn they drink their mead or hydromel.

What do we see? A plain which lies for miles and miles into infinity. Do you not get the smell of burning? Of burnt tinder. Or of whole woods

## *The oil wells*

on fire It is in the air all the time It is stronger, now, than ever But from far off That is a column or pillar of smoke, over there It may be thirty or forty miles away It is difficult to tell the distance in this immensity But it has not moved all the time we have been looking at it Nor altered shape. But it must climb half-way into the sky It must have the hornets flying round it And there is something else, low down We know that is where the river runs They are trying to cross the river under an artificial smoke cloud which was laid down during the night In a Stygian darkness of their own making But that, too, is many miles away Did you hear that? Or, rather, did you feel it, behind your ears, for it is a pressure or a feeling, more than it is an actual sound? There is a white flash in midst of the fog, and long after that, the detonation, so far off that it is difficult to be quite certain

Look in another direction! And there are torn locks of smoke blowing on the air And not a sound, nor any flame These travel, or dance, upon the horizon And one of them lifts, or curls away, as we are staring at it Just as though it shrinks into its own stalk and vanishes If you did not search for it, you would not know that anything was happening Except for that smell of fire Or it may be that there is unrest and dread in the very landscape and in the colour of the corn For, in the whole distance, it is silvery white. It is not honeycoloured as ripe corn should be It is white, like the flaxen hair of children As if it has been bleached Down in the south there is the coal basin And the new industrial towns of the Five Year Plan, from which the workers have issued who are like dancers at rehearsal Can this be a blight or pallor from the collieries? But it is in character with this land of birch trees And there can be huge floods higher than the sighing reeds Not now This is the summer drought Lanes of fire have been driven through the harvest It is the singeing of the flaxen hair That is this smell of burning

One quarter of the heavens is entirely black It is where the oil wells are on fire Could you behold the oil fields you might wonder what they are So many pyramidal tents of wood and steel, as regular as the crosses in a war cemetery Termite town, or where the lemmings swarm Put up with gnawing teeth and claw-like, rodent hand, as ingenious as where the beavers build their dams in the flaming maple woods, but, here, to an unknown purpose For, tombs or tenements, they are untenanted But for the incendiaries with their fiery torches The wreckers have put down their mines and fuses The black earth is being scorched The bowels of earth are burning The lakes of petroleum are on fire Here is the burning river Phlegethon, near to Cimmerian Bosphorus, and flowing out of Tartarus The smoke hangs like a black pall along the heavens Here, according to Virgilus the sorcerer, are punished those who have undertaken unjust and cruel wars

A sudden wind brings up the sound of cranking From far below Just as though we listened for it at the pit shaft, or leaned over and looked down into the well Then, silence But it starts up again, but wearily, as though wound up with the handle The machines have come a long dis-

## *The nest of straw*

tance From half across the world It misfires and splutters. It refuses. Can it have a soul? But it has been brought to obedience It roars out, clear and vibrant, over the white harvest Where is it? And what can it be? They are still reaping with the tractor We see them on the brow of the hill, going down from us into the hollow, and binding as they go Their white barracks is unchanged No dead bodies dangle from the apple trees.

Now that, certainly, was gunfire

Like a sharp stroke upon the drum that imitates the shaking thunder. Struck with the hand, not with the drumstick A stroke and a recoil, like a head that lifts up and barks, lowering itself again All in a moment Before there is time to look And another, and another voice of anger They snarl But that was something deeper and much bigger It is as when the heavy raindrops come And again Down there Yes, down along the river And there is the crunch, crunch of bombs, sometimes with a ring of metal A dumb, senseless, crunching, a disintegration, choking in its own earth, as the muddy fountain falls Ah! but that grated, it had the clunk of steel A stick of bombs, six at a time, one after another, dropping in a pattern, so close there is no time to escape All the eggs are falling from the basket But no They are dropping like the grains of sand They are deliberate, and will not be hurried They are in entire control It has been planned where they shall fall All in the distance So far away, it is inhuman But the sky above has little puffs of white smoke, which drift, and do not come down They are not parachutes It is but anti-aircraft fire And suddenly, with screaming engine, as though the metal cried in pain and fear, an aeroplane plunges wildly down, in flames, and there comes a crash, like an empty bottle thrown against a wall And no more So die the moths and flies So die the sons of the morning

Another and another swarm come out of the sun, drop their load, and are gone It is the law of nature that they should lay their eggs and fall into the flame Not all But they come back again It is the nuptial flight of the adolescent, and sooner or later it must end in death Such are the nuptials of homo sapiens and his machines It is the marriage in the cockpit It must be some kind of atavism when they die above the oil derricks For that is the trend of the battle It is for this they devastate the cornlands They are passing through with fire and sword The rivers wash the blood down into the salty sea For the rivers are terrible to cross There are rivers three or four miles wide But drowning is more merciful than burning And it is quicker than to be left dying in the harvest, near to the red poppies In a space of trampled corn The heads of oats or rye, after a day and a night of agony, take on those attitudes of the waiting, staring furniture in a room In dumb attendance upon their owner or inhabitant It is their inanimate personality, and fever and dying thirst can give them all a meaning

There are bodies lying in perfect little nests of straw You could find a crumpled cornstalk clenched tightly in a hand That is the moment of his appearance at the gates of death That is the sceptre or talisman held in his hand He is lying in the fouled nest with an arm above the corn

## *Actus Tragicus*

Little mysteries surround him How could one, so maimed, unlace his heavy boots and leave them in the virgin corn? It is the mystery of the tramp's fires where there is always an old boot, and sometimes a woman's shoe, among the tins Ah! but they lit the dry sticks and cooked themselves a meal. They had enough life to quarrel, or to sleep holding hands But this is the wounded insect that drags itself upon the blades of grass He has not moved, except to roll over and lie upon his face

In places the corn has become a sickroom, or the bay of a hospital to which they bring the dying But there are no screens put round the beds It is part of the degradation that they lie in heaps as though tipped out of a cart There is a fatality that forces them to crawl on one another, like puppies in a newborn litter Their agony makes them blind and oblivious Only the rare spirit tries to creep away and die The others, like lower forms of life, climb upon the bodies It is not that they seek company But theirs is the clumsiness of those who have lost perception through all the faculties being expressed in pain Nothing is left over They choose the short road, and like Hydra, the many-headed monster, lie huddled close For it is a multiple agony It is not enough for one to die Each head, separately, must be deprived of life

They babble, too, in unknown tongues In the thick speech of the Turcoman, and in the dialects of beyond the mountains Some are lying near their enemy There is this horrible truth of battle, that one is male and the other female There is always this between the combatants It is not the weaker, necessarily, who is the female Neither brute force, nor guile, are the property of one sex only Both can be combined in one body Those, also, who have become weak as babes can be killed by a weak woman When the night turns cold, in the dawn, at the hour when many babes are born The dealing of the death blow has a parallel in life, as all lovers know But of this other, none alive can tell Nor if they meet again in death But the *Actus Tragicus* must be more compelling than the casual acts of love Or its long habits For love has many meanings There is but one death But many sorts It is a casual death to be killed by someone whom you have not seen Who fired at random, or but pulled a lever Will they meet each other in another world? No No There are no more meetings But death comes in many moods In a dream, or when wide awake Here it creeps, night and day, among the wounded bodies Some have lived for a week, sucking the dew from the cornstalks, chewing the white heads of clover Others were left behind, last night, when darkness fell This is their first morning in the trampled corn

Some have been quick to learn For it is like living on a raft far out at sea There is the chance of rescue But the horizon shakes with fires, and the battle passes Behind it, huge areas have been burnt down to a blackened stubble It is as bad as when the oil from a tanker catches fire Then, the water will be quite calm, but blazing Here, the first sparks fall, and lodge in the beards of corn like pretty fireflies Soon the heat begins It is smouldering a few feet away, and brands of fire fall on their hands and faces The crackling flames come licking up, and the whole

## *All night through*

cornland is ablaze Some escape, by miracle, who were in a ring of fires. But many others have been consumed, or suffocated

Gigantic efforts have been made to get in the harvest and gangs are at work who sleep for an hour or two in the fields and then take their turn upon the tractors But the Cossack villages are on fire If you listen you will hear them burning They have been bombed from the air without discrimination and for the sake of terror A day or two, usually, before the battle comes to them It is this that makes the harvest like a vision or hallucination For it continues in spite of everything And the harvesters, themselves, are lying shattered in the corn It is, even, difficult to tell the difference in the wrecked machines, whether tank or tractor, when they have been blown to fragments When they have been disintegrated to their metal parts, and are lying in a pool of oil, with their crew beside them Some, of course, have been caught in the machinery, or are underneath the engine It is worth no one's while to lift them out They are left with the machine on top of them Later, friend or foe will look for scrap iron The lorries will come round for the rags and bones

Which way is the battle going? I can see nothing Do you see nothing? I can see nothing, nothing I hear the humming of the winged insects, for they are insects in structure, they are not birds of the air They have their sting They do not fight with beak and claw They are mischievous like insects and attack in swarms Their blood diet makes them dangerous The wings of man are fatal as the anopheles There can be no mercy from the air

How many millions hear the humming while they go to sleep! I have had dreams in which fantasy, born of the imprisonment of war, has brought long aerial convoys flying low, and in the locomotion of a dream, travelling no swifter than a railway train, but painted in the bright colours of the totem pole and passing with the noise of ploughshares along the air The shapes of Leonardo's fancy dragon devouring tiger, or eagle fighting lion, not the slate grey steel and canvas

For no one can be rid of the humming while he sleeps It is universal to all mankind And those who do not hear it, dream of it The youth of the world plunges down into the fires They fall in flames even when the earth does not burn below them This is the horror behind the shuttered window For all blinds are drawn While they fly at night it is as though a perpetual funeral was passing down the street They have imposed the symbols of death, and of a dead body lying in the house, upon the living These dragging years must be the climacteric There are so many broken nights For the sweet peace of night has gone If there is no noise, the thoughts of evil are always present, and the wings of evil beat about the room The body rushing through the night means some devilry, it may be half a continent away Women and children will be weeping, and at four and five in the morning there are the returning wings. In imagination those pinions must drip with blood The lone flyer comes lumping home The others arrive later, flying line ahead, in Indian file, as braves in the dark forest Their eagle plumes are gory with blood, and they circle and come down.

## *Slitting Mill*

It is a little before dawn Soon they will be awake in Dachau The sirens sound an hour before dawn in the concentration camps They are woken by the loud speaker In the huge camps of the starving and in the dreadful ghettos In every hell in Poland and in Russia But the reign of hell may be extended It may reach to other lands Evil does not always perish The camps spring up like funguses in the footsteps of the conqueror There are weeds that only grow where blood has flowed, and plants that carry poison Not for themselves They are the poison bearers The deadly nightshade offers its black fruits near to the purple bilberries, and for further enticement still hangs its flowers of evil

It is singular that you can listen and hear no human voice But the pilots call to each other upon their radio telephones There may be some creature in the harvest that can communicate, that listens and answers while it gnaws the leaf That was born only for destruction and has no other instinct, that has come over the immense distance only for this purpose, but, always, from the one direction, out of the further immensity While this blows the other way it is the anticyclone It has never succeeded before in human history And, indeed, it blows all ways at once What is left of the world watches in dumb horror We can hear nothing We are too far away We are hidden, in imagination, among the shocks of corn Among the primitive harvesters who reap until they fall down reaping and are left, unburied, in the corn Who take bread out of a basket and sit down to eat their dinners in the white light of midday, and then work on through the August afternoon We find a party of reapers standing in a circle on a rising ground, holding their sickles aloft One in the middle holds up some ears of corn tied together with flowers, and they call out three times together, in words that are unintelligible This is their harvest cry It is the cutting of the last sheaf of corn, and the 'crying of the neck' Towards nightfall we shall hear them cry again, from far off, through the quiet evening air For we are lost here, or becalmed, in the old pagan customs

The scythes come from an ancient smithy, near the pagan dew ponds. There they have forged for many centuries the swords that cut the harvest Do you remark the curve of the sickle, in the gesture of gathering in? For cutlass or scimitar have another meaning Their blade curves back, and the sharp edge is outward, for striking down They do not cut at the foot of the cornstalks and pull them in They strike down, but they do not reap That is the difference And now the husbandman takes up the whetstone It is so familiar, the awkward balancing of the scythe pole upon the ground, and the slow sharpening of the blade More in keeping with August than the cranking of the tractor engine, which splutters and refuses, or reaps mercilessly and does its bidding He whets the scythe and bows his back to reap again The cut sheaves are laid in rows upon the ground, and in this moment they are like dresses put upon the floor Women's dresses The dresses of mummers or of masqueraders

There is an appalling fight, with flame-throwers, in the village street Devils out of the mediaeval hell have come up with liquid fire They



## *Flammenwerfer*

wear suits of non-inflammable skin, and walk slowly, with the heavy tank or container strapped on to their backs, and the hose pipe and the nozzle held in both hands. No one, who has ever seen it, will forget these masked men in their heavy fireproof boots. They go in with as much caution as though they have set foot upon another planet, three abreast, and then turn on the fire. It is a burning jet. It burns holes in walls. They direct it on to other human beings as you might stop to kill an insect, and pass on. They do not waste the liquid fire. They are gloved and masked as though the air and light contaminate. They have been trained specially, and are not often used. We could have seen these monsters laughing and joking in the lorries, with their helmets off. For their only use is to advance and burn things up. They are young men, heavily built, who might work with the road gang, or as navvies. But, in the street fighting, they are automatons, and their only analogy is to gladiators in the Roman games. When one of them has exhausted his supply of liquid fire he can only put the nozzle down and walk away. Then, he is vulnerable. But the street is littered with dead bodies. It smells of burning oil. The black smoke smudges upon the bloodstained walls. Bombs and grenades are being thrown. There is desperate resistance in cellars and from upper floors. A tank drives straight into a house and knocks it down. Mortars are firing at point blank range, and land mines are exploding. The dogs of the town run about with their tails between their legs.

The cleaning up may last until to-morrow morning. But there is a village every few miles. More odd, still, there are monasteries and churches which have been made over into schools or barns. The retreat and advance are terrible, alike. Over this endless distance which is, in fact, a beginning with no end. For even the huge rivers are no obstacle. It is only a question of so much time and so many lives, until the pontoons have been put across, until the rubber boats and rafts have been brought up. The tanks have been refuelled and overhauled. They are ready to begin again. Already the enemy planes are dive bombing the towns and villages that lie beyond. The further horizon is ringed with fires. Pillars of smoke rise, steadily, one after another. But the women and children and old men are left behind. They must hide in the houses until the enemy has gone on. The police come later and a census of the slaves is taken. After, all are driven back into that other distance.

The cornland is all stubble now, and on fire in many places. The land of Cockaigne is laid flat and bare. The dead bodies feast, in mimic, and are heaped together as though they have fallen at the banquet table. They are left, like weasels on the string, to wither. Like the rats, and owls, and other vermin. Like the hawks and jackdaws. You can tell them by their skulls. Sometimes by a tattered coat, or, by his clothing, if he has fallen from the air. Whether he fell out of a tank or lorry, or crawled into the corn to die. The plain is thick with broken, burnt out fuselages. And the plain darkens into the distance, and the contagion spreads. The wings of death fly on.

## Book Six

### FALSE MESSIAH

**I**t is 1666, the Messianic year. There have been portents, plagues, fires, and prophecies. We are in midst of them.

For a century, and more, false Messiahs have proclaimed themselves. Jews, Christians, and Anabaptists. We could have seen David Jorries, who announced himself to be the true Christ, in Delft. Three years after he died, his corpse was taken up and burnt at the stake. Jacob Melstinski proclaimed himself in Poland. Ezekiel Meth and Isaiah Stueffel, Hans Keyl of Gerlingen, and Philippus Ziegler, Christina Regina Buderin, were others who made prophecy, or proclaimed themselves. Solomon Molcho, a Marrano from Portugal, born Diogo Pires, who had been received in the Vatican by Clement VII, was burnt at Mantua. 'And the Lord smelled the sweet savour, and took to Him the spotless soul'. His prophet had been David Reuben, a Jew from Central Arabia, of black complexion, of dwarf stature and a hunchback, worn to a living skeleton by his fasting. David Reuben, like a terrifying apparition of fanaticism, rode on a white horse to the Vatican, where the Pope received him. He was arrested and imprisoned with Solomon Molcho, the Messiah whom he preached. His fate is uncertain. But a Jew, 'from Arabia', after long imprisonment was burnt at Evora, in Portugal, by the Inquisition, and any who have seen those dungeons, with long inscriptions scratched into the damp walls, must shudder at his fate.<sup>1</sup> High up on the tower of St Lambert's church at Munster, in Westphalia, still hang the three iron cages in which the bodies of the Anabaptists, John of Leyden, Krechting, and Knipperdolk, were exposed after being torn with red hot pincers. John of Leyden, roaring like a bull, bit through the rope, and had to be bound to the stake with an iron collar.

What stories could the twelve thousand moss-grown tombstones tell in the old cemetery of the Jews at Prague! Here lies buried Rabbi Jehudah ben Bezalel, a Kabbalist, an astrologer and astronomer, who was a magician and worked miracles, who was the friend of Tycho Brahe. He had a long and mysterious interview in the Hradchin with the Kaiser Rudolph II and refused, during his whole lifetime, to explain what passed between them. Or it will bring us to gabled Cracow, where Dr John Dee and his adept or medium, Edward Kelly, looked into the crystal and saw visions, far into the night, while, from the church tower, the interrupted trumpet call, the *hejnat*, announced the ghostly hours.

It will take us to the Jewish streets of Wilno and Lublin. This town was capital city of the Ashkenazi and they held their synods in it. We shall

<sup>1</sup> The Palace of the Inquisition at Evora is, now, the Hotel Aleutejano, and the dungeons are below the dining room.

### *'The girl I left behind me'*

know Volhynia and Podolia, Minsk and Pinsk, Chernigov and Poltava. In all of them the Beth Hamidrash is waiting ready for the traveller. We would enter the old synagogue at Szczepieszyn, or one that is fortified, at Szydlów, with battlements of brick, and in the interior, frescoed walls, a wooden synagogue at Kamionka Strumiłowa with polychrome decorations, one at Ostróg that is subterranean, another at Przedsbórz which has rustic Jewish paintings, or that of Grodno, which, with its roof in double tiers, is like a pagoda.

Here, later, in Podolia, will rise the sect of the Hassidim. Its founder was the Rabbi Israel Ba'al Schem Tob, known as BeShT from his initials, who was given the title of Tzadik by his followers. At his death, in 1760, his three chief disciples, who were, also, his grandsons, split the Hassidim into as many different sects and dispersed their numbers. But they had many followers in Wallachia, Moldavia, Hungary, and Galicia. In such towns as Maramorossziget, the Rumanian Sighetul Marmatei, where, even now, Israelites of the Middle Ages walk the shabby streets in gowns of gabardine with the fox fur round their hats. But, more still, in the Ukraine and in Poland, among those towns we named. Here was the beginning of the Hassidim among the forests. Here the Tzadik fasted and listened to the birds. His doctrine was a ravishment or ecstasy, of which music was a part. Thus, their sacred dances, hand in hand, in honour of the law.

How cold are those names of towns. Grodno, Ostróg, Przedsbórz, Szczepieszyn! In the plain, in the forests of silver birch trees. The snow lies for ten weeks upon the ground, the lakes and rivers are frozen for four months. In the summer it is not hot, but rains. When we think of their synagogues and crowded tenements we see them illumined by the oil lamp. We smell the burning wicks. We know their diet of cucumbers, gherkins, and salted herrings. We hear the rolling ecstasy of the cantors at their virtuoso tricks, wherein are mingled the acrobatics of the concert pianist and the feats of the showman in the rag fair. In the words of *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*: 'While intoning, they perform bravura passages like the violin playing of a Hungarian Gypsy rhapsodist, seeking to re-enforce their tones by supporting the jaw behind the ear with the hands after the fashion of the London costermonger, or to get new effects by thrusting their thumbs into their throats—an ancient practice known as the "Temple", and illustrated from ancient times on the Nineveh slab depicting the capture of Susa.' Into their music, beside that which is original they have introduced folk tunes and popular songs from many lands. This race, who have produced half of the executive musicians of the world, have even been known to adapt the words of their sacred liturgy to the tune of 'The girl I left behind me'. In the same way, as we shall see, later, in a particular instance, many oriental tunes and songs that dated from their long residence in Spain remained a part of Jewish ritual. We shall speak of that when we come to the song of Meluselda.

We are near the ancient Kingdom of the Khazars, towards the Caspian, and a theory has been advanced that many of the red bearded Jews of Poland and the Ukraine are, in reality, Judaicised Tartars deriving from

## *The Hassidin*

that Kingdom Among them are a few Karaite Jews, who have their holy place at Chufut Kalé in the Crimea, but who were removed to Lithuania by the Grand Duke Witold, early in the fifteenth century, and alone of their race took to agriculture, being found chiefly in the neighbourhood of Wilno and still speaking, at this present time, their own dialect which has many Turkish words in it <sup>1</sup> The curious, interior life of these Jewish communities in Poland attained to its climax before the massacres of 1648, when Bogdan Chmielnicki, the hetman of the Zaporoghian Cossacks, began his pogroms, and again a hundred years later when the Jews had recovered something of their prosperity Then, the sect of the Hassidin had its origin, Rabbi Israel Ba'al Schem walked among them in his snow white robe, and the songs of their ecstasy rang against the chandeliers and seven-branched candlesticks of brass Their prayer book and liturgy are that of the Sephardim, or Spanish Jews We would listen for the Spanish inflection, for the falling cadence Into what survival of the old world of the Orient have we wandered? The formal wigs of the married women recall the wig of Pharaoh's wife These are faces and dresses of the Captivity But in their purity, and without contamination, we should find them in the crucial years of 1648 and 1666

The extraordinary number of different religious sects that had sprung up, more Christian, of course, than Jewish, is evidence of the religious excitement and apprehension of that time There was universal expectation of the Messiah, while the fact that he must be, of necessity, Jewish in race, if it had escaped the perceptions of many Puritans, was not lost upon the Jews themselves The holy book of the Zohar prophesied that the millennium would take place in the year 5408 of the Jewish era, which corresponded to 1648, but the Puritans and the Reformed churches of Northern Europe, basing their calculations upon the Revelation of St John, predicted it for 1666 It is difficult, perhaps, for us to comprehend the fervency of these beliefs, or to realize the degree to which the Puritans, in England, were influenced by their reading of the Old Testament It gave them, perhaps, a tolerance towards the Jews that would not have been possible in a Catholic country It was proposed by the Levellers, during the Commonwealth, to alter the Christian Sunday to the Jewish Sabbath, and to create a new Parliament modelled upon the Jewish Sanhedrin Cromwell was impelled to say in one of his speeches to the Commons 'When they tell us, not that we are to regulate the law, but that the law is to be abrogated and subverted and perhaps wish to bring in Judaical law instead of our own known laws settled among us, this is worthy of every magistrate's consideration' Such proposals would

<sup>1</sup> There are synagogues or temples of the Karaite Jews at Luck, in Volhynia, at Wilno, and near by, at the little town of Troki, between two lakes, close to the Lithuanian frontier At Wilno and at Troki, it is curious to note, there are still mosques belonging to the Tartars who were brought back by the Grand Duke Witold from his campaigns in the Crimea, along the Volga, and in the Caucasus, and whom he settled chiefly at Troki They fought in his wars against the Teutonic Knights

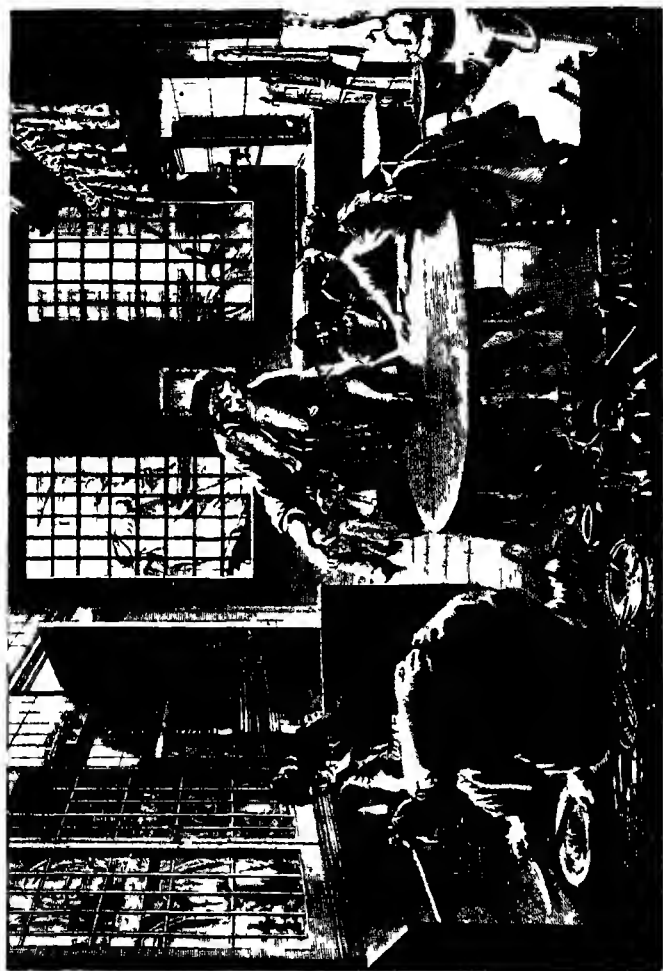
## *No more bets are taken*

not have been possible in, for instance, Spain of the Inquisition. It might seem, indeed, as if the most fruitful soil for the Messiah would be some point of the authentic Jewish Orient, not far from Palestine, but in direct contact through merchants and by word of mouth with the devout expectations of the Puritans, and it was this, as we shall know presently, that came to pass.

The city and exchange of Amsterdam were not behind in this. For the Calvinists had allowed into their midst a settlement of the exiled Jews of Portugal, who for a hundred years had been settled in Antwerp, but were driven thence after the sack and pillage of that city in 1576, and took with them their industry of diamond polishing to Amsterdam, where they engaged, as well, in other branches of commerce. Later, Jews from Poland and Germany were admitted. And the Jewish colony in Hamburg, the Hanseatic town, was little less important than that of Amsterdam. Both towns were in direct communication, through their merchants, with the East, while the Sephardim Jews had correspondence, financial and religious, with their Spanish speaking brothers in Constantinople, Smyrna, and Salonica. It was, unconsciously, an alliance of conspiracy between the Puritans and Jews. Both were looking for the same event. It would have been strange, indeed, had no medium appeared.

For as 1666, the Messianic year, drew near, the Jews were thrown into hysterical tumult by the rumours that came to them from the East. The synagogues were full of dancing Jews, and the streets with men and women dancing to the beat of drums. Every ship that came brought fresh news from Turkey. The Messiah would announce himself at any time, and was, now, in Sinyina. Books were printed in Amsterdam that described the ceremonial for the crowning of the Messiah, or laid down the prayers to use, and the correct manner in which to address him. The entire Jewish world was in uproar. There were riots among the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia, while, in Hungary, the Jews were already removing the roofs from their houses. Jews of Avignon, the Papal city, were preparing to emigrate to Jerusalem in the spring of 1666. Pamphlets were printed in London that gave the history of Sabbathai Zevi, and he is discussed in the correspondence of de Chaumont, Ambassador of Louis XIV to the Sublime Porte, and in the reports of the Bailo Ballarino, Ambassador of the Signoria of Venice.

In Hamburg the excitement was not less intense. The Sephardim had letters from Turkey giving the latest news, and ran with them to the synagogues where they were read aloud. The young Portuguese Jews wore broad green ribbons, for that was Sabbathai Zevi's colour. Many Jews sold their homes and all their belongings. There were instances in which the more cautious and far-seeing of the community stored their houses with linen and dried foods in preparation for an immediate journey to Jerusalem. At the same time it was announced in the synagogue that 'All wagers on the coming Day of Redemption (and God grant it come soon!) are henceforward forbidden. Whosoever engageth in such wagers with Gentiles shall be liable to a fine of ten thalers.' A Lutheran pastor in



THE SEARCH FOR THE LEAVEN  
by B. Picart



## Daidsbundler

Thuringia, Michael Buchenroedern, in his book attacking the Sabbatians, remarks: 'But what is even more ludicrous is that many Jews are now having their hair cut so as to be able to hear the blast of the new Messiah's horn more easily'. And he concludes 'How readily some rascal, by standing on a hill at night near a town or city inhabited by Jews, and blowing a horn, could rouse all the Jews and make fools of them with his horn!' Pastor Buchenroedern, moreover, draws up a list of false Messiahs with the words 'So, let me repeat, there is nothing new in the fact that, in this year of grace 1666, the Jews are so eager and full of longing to accept the alleged new Messiah and to return to their native land. It has not come down to them from the clouds, it is inborn in them, inherited from their fathers, and imbibed and digested with their mothers' milk'. This ecclesiastic with his starched Lutheran ruff, dwelling, we doubt not, in a square brick house beside his church, with his wife and it is probable ten or even twenty children, is like one of the Philistines from Schumann's *Carnaval*, coldly disapproving, and determined to interrupt and spoil these Jewish pastimes.

It was among the Sephardim of the Orient, and the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and Hamburg that Sabbathia Zevi found his following. These latter we can see depicted in the engravings to the *Cérémonies Religieuses* of Bernard Picart. This work, in eleven volumes, was published in an English edition with plates by the 'Famous Picart', a French painter and pupil of Lebrun who settled in Amsterdam in 1710, where he was much employed by the booksellers. This is, in fact, the most successful part of his huge undertaking, for it is evident that he drew what he saw before his eyes in Amsterdam. Five of his plates portray the ceremonies of the Portuguese Jews. The others depict the German community of Amsterdam, and a difference, alike in dress and physiognomy, is plainly visible. The work opens with a splendid double page engraving of the opening of the synagogue of the Portuguese Jews. This had taken place in 1675, so that it must be a historical reconstruction on the part of Picart. We are told that the *hechal*, and the *ba* or desk, are of a rare and precious wood called *xacharanda*, that comes from the Indies (actually the *jacaranda* or blue flowering tree of Brazil). A crowd of Gentiles are among the spectators, one or two of them wearing the typical Dutchman's breeches. But the Portuguese Jews, who are conspicuous from their beards, wear the *taled*, a white square veil with *strings* and tassels. The devout Jews have covered themselves all over with them. The strings and tassels are called the *zizith*. They wear the *tessilin* or *phylacteries* upon their foreheads, enclosing Kabbalistic texts or sentences that are sewed up in them. We read that 'Jews of a piety above the common standard have sometimes carried the devotion of the *tessilin* into the bridal bed, a wise and ingenious contrivance to sanctify an action, where sanctity seems very hardly practicable, and where, too, the most solid piety runs the risk of falling into strange distractions'. The interior of the synagogue itself, a building by the architect Dorsman, is not unlike the interior of a Dutch church, and has fine brass chandeliers hanging from the ceiling.



## *The Portuguese Jews*

In another plate we are shown the festival of the Passover, taking place in a room in Amsterdam which is rendered in the smallest detail. It is the moment of the examination of the leaven. In the words of the commentary "The sun itself is not bright enough to give light into those cracks and corners of the house, where unluckily any crumbs of unleavened bread may be slip't in, not content with the sun's light they take a candle, and if the master of the family has the least suspicion that his sight is weak, he makes no difficulty of taking his spectacles, the better to look into the cracks and interstices of the walls. But he is still dissatisfied with so strict a search, for after ferreting everywhere, by night, by day, by the sun, by candlelight, and with spectacles, he beseeches God that he would be pleased to make up the defects of his search that all leavened bread in the house, as well what he has found, as what he has not, may become like the dust of the earth, and be reduced to nothing'

In another engraving, a splendid wooden cupboard, like that to be seen in sacristies where vestments are kept, made with pillars and pediments, in fact, an architectural frontispiece, is shown with its cupboard doors thrown wide open and the rolls of the law within, in their embroidered coverings, with the rimmonim, or silver ornaments with bells, on top of them. Later on, we have the Circumcision, again with many bearded Jews, the Redemption of the firstborn, in which there is a negro page, who hands round sweetmeats, and many elderly Jewesses in their distinctive headdresses, and the series ends with nuptial ceremonies, respectively, among the German and the Portuguese Jews. The Rabbi, with long hair and beard, wears the Andalusian, widebrimmed sombrero.

Such is this unique document depicting the Jews of Portugal in their new habitat in Amsterdam. But we know them, as well, from Rembrandt's etchings. Dating from the year 1648 there is the plate of 'Jews in a Synagogue', a scene which is very different from the church interiors of Amsterdam as seen in the paintings of Emanuel de Witte, or the more imaginative Saenredam. The same figures of old men in peaked hats, in turbans, or flat bonnets, often leaning on a staff or walking stick, occur in the 'Hundred Guilder Print' in the Death of the Virgin, in Christ Preaching ('La Petite Tombe'), in Christ Disputing with the Doctors, and, particularly, in the magnificent Christ Presented to the People. There are two etchings called the 'Great' and 'Little' Jewish Brides, and etched portraits of Samuel Menasseh ben Israel, who came to London on a mission to Cromwell, and of Ephraim Bonus, a Jewish physician and alchemist. It is evident that Rembrandt, as his poverty and then bankruptcy made all luxuries and acquisitions impossible for him, was driven by his temperament towards the exotic that lay so near to hand. For many years, from 1639 to 1656, his home was No. 4 of the Jodenbreestraat, the main street of the Jewish quarter, which in a few years was to have the new synagogue of the Portuguese Jews at its corner. In this way Rembrandt tasted foreign travel and knew the sights and colours of the

## *Birth of the Messiah*

Orient It was, ever, humanity that was his subject, more than nature. He will, certainly, have heard rumours of Sabbathai Zevi.

The impostor, or false Messiah, Sabbathai Zevi, Shabbethai Zethi ben Mordecai, Sabetay Seby, Shabbasi Zebbi, Schabtai Zewi, or it is spelt, as well, Sevi, Sebi, Zebi, was born at Smyrna in 1626, where his father was a poulterer in poor circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Some years later, when there was war between Turkey and Venice and the Frank merchants removed, in consequence, from Constantinople and Salonica to Smyrna, his father became agent to a London commercial firm, and as a result grew rich and prosperous. They were a family of Sephardim, or Spanish Jews, who had settled in the Morea, and Sabbathai had two younger brothers, Joseph and Elijah. They entered into business, but Sabbathai was destined for the religious life. He was sent to the Talmudic schools, where he early acquired a great reputation for learning, although, in a phrase which it is difficult for a Gentile to understand, 'halakic and pilpulistic studies did not appeal to him'. He had already distinguished himself by his preaching, and by the extremity of his fasting. On occasion he fasted from Sabbath to Sabbath, and bathed on the seashore in all weathers in performance of his ablutions. He was remarkable, also, for his personal beauty. Dean Milman, in his *History of the Jews*, tells how 'his body breathed forth a delicious odour which the physician of the family, suspecting to be perfume, declared, on examination, to be a natural exhalation from the skin'. A Jewish contemporary writes of him 'He was tall as a cedar of Lebanon, his fresh brown-complexioned face framed by a black beard radiated beauty, and with his princely garments and proud bearing he was a magnificent figure to behold'. 'His face used to shine like that of some unearthly being', and he had large and penetrating eyes which are always a feature in his portraits.

One of the early mysteries connected with Sabbathai Zevi is his marriage, and he was to have, eventually, five wives. Upon this first occasion he wedded, when twenty years old, Channah, a young girl of exceptional beauty, but refused to consummate the marriage. He was summoned before the Chachamim or Rabbis, and divorced his wife. A second time a bride was found for him, but, again, he denied her, and on her appeal to the elders he was ordered to divorce her. He then announced that a voice from heaven had told him that neither of these women was to be his wife. It is apparent that, as demagogue and spiritual leader, Sabbathai Zevi belonged to that order of ascetics who play with sensuality but do not indulge in it, and it is a category with which a contemporary instance has brought the modern world familiar. But 1648, the promised year of the Jews, had now arrived, and Sabbathai Zevi, proceeding to the synagogue, stepped into the pulpit and pronounced the full name of God, the

<sup>1</sup> For the life of Sabbathai Zevi, I have consulted *The Messiah of Ismir Sabbathai Zevi*, by Joseph Kastein, translated by Huntley Paterson, London, John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1931, an essay, 'The Turkish Messiah,' in *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, by Israel Zangwill, London, William Heinemann, 1898, and articles in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*.

## *Bride of the Messiah*

dread word Jehovah, a thing which no Jew after the Diaspora or dispersion of the Jews, had ever done. For this he was cursed by the Rabbis, who placed a ban of excommunication upon him, and denounced him to the Turks. He fled to Salonica and, after some years in Constantinople, appeared in Cario. Here, he made an important disciple in the person of Raphael Joseph Chelebi, a Jew of immense wealth, and master of the mint, of so pious a character that he fed in his house, every day, fifty poor Talmudists and Kabbalists. About the same time he met Nathan Ghaz-zati, or Nathan Benjamin Levi, a Jew of German or Ashkenazi origin, but born at Gaza. His father was a Jerusalem begging agent, and himself was married to the beautiful, one-eyed daughter of a Jew of Portugal. This fanatic was to be his prophet, and in a sense, his evil genius. For thirteen years Sabbathai Zevi lived in Jerusalem, preparing himself for his mission, or it could be said, waiting for his opportunity. And it must have been evident to him that, having failed in 1648, the promised year of the Jews, the next occasion would be the Messianic year of 1666.

Like that class of spiritualist medium to which he belonged, Sabbathai Zevi was willing to augment his natural, or supernatural powers, by any adventitious circumstance that offered. During the long period between 1648 and 1666, no less than eighteen years, he may have felt often enough that those powers were waning. We shall find that, like another desperate and notorious gambler, but in the lives of men, he would embark upon dangers in the hope that a miracle would save him. And it may be that, in what we are about to recount, there is some parallel to the curious dalliance of that other, and ternifying, dreamer with an acrobatic dancer from 'The Merry Widow'. For this fanatic, and dangerous aspirant to divine honours, Sabbathai Zevi, now married, for the third time. And, in his method, it was as though he answered to an advertisement in the matrimonial newspapers. His wife, Sarah, was a woman of mystery, whose true history is quite unknown. She was a Polish Jewess and, her parents having been killed in a pogrom, she was taken as a foundling into a Polish convent. When eighteen years old, some Jews found her wandering, in rags, in a Jewish cemetery, and she told a story that the ghost of her father had appeared to her, and ordered her to jump from the window. She even exhibited the marks of his nails upon her skin. And she announced to them that she was to be the appointed bride of the Messiah.

The superstitious Jews, probably influenced, too, by her beauty, took her into their homes and hid her. Upon discovering that her brother, Jamuel, had fled to Amsterdam, where he had set up as a tobacco merchant, they forwarded her from community to community, crossing Germany, until she arrived at Amsterdam. Here, still declaring that she was to be the bride of the Messiah, she started as a prostitute. Contemporary accounts leave no doubt of this, and all are agreed as to the phenomenal beauty of her person. As a prophetess, therefore, but unique in her kind, she set out wandering in search of the Messiah. She travelled through Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, and reports of her are extant from

## *Priest of Cybele*

Frankfort, Mantua, and Leghorn. In all of them she is described as a harlot, but it is apparent, also, that they regarded her as a supernatural being. Scholars and Rabbis came to interview her, but they leave no doubt as to the life she led in Mantua, in which, indeed, she might seem to us like a character from Ben Jonson. In Leghorn, the chief Jewish settlement in Italy, among the Sephardim, she was interviewed by Mose Pinheiro, a devoted follower of Sabbathai Zevi, and brother-in-law of the Rabbi and Kabbalist, Joseph Ergas, who lived in Leghorn. Mose Pinheiro sent word of her to Sabbathai Zevi. It is probable that, till now, she had never heard that name. Perhaps, also, she had not yet met a Jew who claimed to be the Messiah. But Sabbathai Zevi replied immediately that she was his destined wife. A mission was sent to fetch her, and they were married in Cairo, with great ceremony, in the house of Chelebi. After which they went back together to Jerusalem.

It was in the early months of 1665, and time to get ready for the Messianic year. A proclamation was sent forth by his prophet Nathan Ghazzati to the chiefs of the Jewish communities of Europe. Sabbathai Zevi, meanwhile, proclaimed himself as the Messiah, and in the ensuing tumult set forth, by way of Aleppo, to his birthplace, Smyrna. He was accompanied by crowds of his proselytes, and wore during the whole journey a white silken praying shawl, while his wife Sarah, who rode beside him, wore a cloak of white silk. Their arrival in Smyrna was occasion for the wildest outbursts of religious frenzy. The prophets of Sabbathai Zevi proclaimed him aloud. In the over-enthusiastic diction of Israel Zangwill 'Raphael, a Greek beggar, rhapsodized interminably, and Bloch, a Kabbalist from Germany, a meek, simple soul, had frenzies of fiery inspiration. Samuel Primo, the untiring secretary, scattered ceaseless letters and mysterious manifestos.' The Twenty-first Psalm was sung before him: his picture, icon-like, was surmounted by a crown of gold, and put beside that of King David; and prayers were read in the synagogues in which he was greeted as the Messiah.

But another of the band of Philistines was watching him. This eyewitness and spiritual brother to the Thuringian clergyman, Michael Buchenroedern, was a certain Thomas Coenen, Lutheran chaplain to the Dutch community in Smyrna. Concerning Sabbathai Zevi's relations with Sarah he remarks that 'she was just as little satisfied with him as if she had married a priest of Cybele or a eunuch, and he held aloof from her, as he himself confessed, just as he had done in the case of the others.' All the same a curious sensual element had come into the life of Sabbathai Zevi.

But, indeed, Smyrna, his birthplace, deserves some brief description of its wonders. Above all, it was the city of the Levantines and Frank merchants. Its peculiar traditions were continued until the nineteenth century, of which there is evidence in a guide book of 1878. Here, upon opposite hills, stood a tekké of the Mevlevi or dancing dervishes, in the high Turkish quarter, and in Upper Rose Street the Institution of the Prussian Deaconesses. There were separate quarters for the Gypsies, who

## *Ladino*

spoke their own language, and for the negroes and their few mulattos. Nomads lived between the two railways, which were their frontier, for they wandered from here to China. Among peculiar trades we read of the commerce in scammony, and that galls were still a large article of commerce, but yellow berries had fallen off. The leech business, which was formerly very great, and for which there were large tanks, was also upon the decline. The Greek population spoke Romaic, but used the Athenian dialect in writing. At the village festivals, during the summer, there were fireworks and Gypsy bands, and Greek, Armenian, Albanian, and zebeck dancing. Turkish mountain music, also, could occasionally be heard. This was more especially at the suburb of Seidekeui, where stood the villas of the Dutch Levantines. For there were, in Smyrna, colonies of High Dutch or Hollanders, who spoke English, and of French, who spoke a Provençal dialect of their own with a strange mode of orthography. The opium trade was in the hands of the Hollanders, who exported it to Java. But the Hollanders or High Dutch were fast dwindling in numbers. Their period of prosperity had been during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Smyrna, for its population, must have been among the most picturesque cities of the world.

Not least in its Jewish quarter. For here was a huge settlement of the Sephardim Sabbathai Zevi, a Messiah whose family were in relations with a firm of London merchants, and who understood, it is probable, a few words of English and some sentences in Dutch, spoke Spanish in his own home, and in the house of Chelebi. His success would have meant an extension of the Spanish speaking world. His followers, the Sabbathaians, were in the first place Spanish Jews, and some notice must be given of this body generally. Even in our own times the number of Spanish speaking Jews is estimated at half a million. Their capital city is Salonica, but they speak debased Castilian in Brusa, in Rhodes, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sarajevo. In this latter city the Sephardim women wore, till recently, a headdress of peculiar shape supposed to be in reminiscence of the sailing ships that took them off from Spain. But we return to the seventeenth century, and the Messianic year. In Smyrna they spoke the Castilian language in its purity, not yet degenerated into Ladino, and had preserved the culture and traditions of old Spain. Even the carriers, or sellers of pan de España, in the streets of Smyrna, remarks a writer in *The Jewish Encyclopædia*, maintained the old Spanish grandezza, in spite of their poverty. This pan de España or pan de Leon was a food specially beloved by the Sephardim, who had brought with them, as well, pastel or pastelica, a sort of meat pie, surely identical with the Moorish pastilla, a dish composed of pastry, made after the fashion of mille feuilles and containing eggs, aubergine, and chicken, and dulces or sweetmeats wrapped in paper, the same, doubtless, that we shall find Sabbathai Zevi throwing to the children. Spanish or Moorish melodies were still preserved (some have been found in the last few years in Rhodes). A number of Spanish songs were incorporated in the Jewish ritual and in their family prayers, together with airs of oriental or Tartar origin. *The*



DEDICATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE PORTUGUESE  
JEWS AT AMSTERDAM  
by B Picart



## Song of Melisselda

*Jewish Encyclopaedia* mentions Permetid Bella Amaryllis Temprano Naçes Almendro Tres Colores in Una El Vaquero de la Morayfia Fasi Abasi Silvani. Porque no me Hablas Partistas Amiga Pues vos me Feristes En los campos de Alvansa Doliente Estaba Alessandri La Despedida and to bring the repertory up to date Les Filles de Tarascon, and an air from *Fra Diavolo*

Many of these, we note, are Portuguese or Spanish love songs But Sabbathai Zevi had begun, by now, to make nocturnal progresses, by torchlight, through the streets of Smyrna, accompanied by great crowds, and surrounded by men who carried vessels filled with preserves and sweetmeats, which he threw to the children, and by others who carried vases filled with flowers, while another attendant held a golden comb in a sheaf The white robe of Sabbathai Zevi was held up by two Chachamin or Rabbis, who walked on either side of him Upon his finger was a golden ring engraved with the figure of a serpent, that had its tail in its mouth, a symbol which he may have borrowed from the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph that stood for immortality In his hand he held a silver fan, in imitation of the staff of Aaron, with which he touched individuals among the crowd

As he went, he sang psalms and Spanish love songs Among the latter, the song of the Spanish Princess Melisselda By a curious chance the words of this have survived It is due to the aforementioned, and scandalized, Dutch chaplain, Thomas Coenen, and not the least peculiar feature is the ring of Coyne or Cohen in his name But he was a Dutchman Here are the words of his Dutch translation It may be worth while to quote them for their obvious meaning 'Opklimmende op een berg, en nederlande in een valeye, ontmoette ick Melisselde, de Dochter van den Kayser, dewelcke quam uyt de barrye, van haer te wasschen Haer aengesichte was blinckende als een deegen, haer oogleden als een stalen bogen, haer lippen als coraelen, haer vleesch als melck' 'Melisselda, the Emperor's daughter coming out from her bath, washing her hair her eyelids were steel bows, her lips were like coral, her flesh was white as milk' That, surely, must be a rough version of what the Dutch words mean It is a love song in the vein of the Song of Solomon What is the history of the Song of Melisselda? No one knows The words may be by Sabbathai Zevi, by the Messiah himself, David ben Jesse, the Anointed of the God of Jacob and Israel, the King of Kings, as he had begun to call himself Or it is possible that they were written by the notorious Lurya, a German-Egyptian Kabbalist who lived in Cairo, who wore white robes on the Sabbath, and being somewhat of an astrologer and false Messiah in his own person, affected a fourfold garment in symbol of the four letters of the unspoken name of God

At the side of the Messiah, during his strange nocturnal progresses, was his wife Sarah, the Polish Jewess who had lived as a prostitute in Mantua and Leghorn, and who gave herself freely to whom she wished But in Jewish history, the prophet Hosea had been commanded to marry an unchaste woman Sabbathai Zevi had that precedent He even sang the



## *The Flying Dutchman*

Song of Melisselda in the synagogue, taking the scroll of the thora from the holy tabernacle, and holding it in his arms. But his actions became still more extraordinary. Towards the end of December, 1665, with only two weeks before the coming of the Messianic year, he announced that he had been commanded to cohabit with his wife, and a linen sheet was exhibited in proof of the result of this. Going to the synagogue, he struck the tabernacle seven times with a stick, and once again enunciated the name of God in full, after which he declared that Sarah had conceived a son, but that the son would die. This might be interpreted as an easy evasion of responsibility. Only the extremely credulous can have had faith in the virginity of Sarah.

But Sabbathai Zevi was preparing, now, to fulfil prophecy and proceed to Constantinople where he would take the Sultan's crown from his head. He appointed from his followers twenty-six kings and princes who would divide the world, making his brother Joseph, King of Kings in Judah, and raising his brother Elijah, to be King of the King of Kings. Having done which, he went on board a two-masted saic, on 30 December 1665, and set sail for Constantinople.

Perhaps it is difficult to believe that Sabbathai Zevi had any notion of what would happen next. Circumstances had driven him so far, and he could not go back. But his voyage, such were the storms, lasted for forty days, and during the course of it he must often have seen himself impaled by the Turks, or thrown down upon the hooks. He landed, at last, in a small town upon the Dardanelles. Achmet Koprlu, the Grand Vizier, sent a lieutenant to arrest him, and he was brought in chains to the capital and thrown into the debtors' prison. When asked if he was Messiah and King of the Jews he gave an ambiguous answer, and said he was a scholar sent to collect alms for the poor of Jerusalem. After a time he was received in audience by the Grand Vizier, and with the aid of a bribe, or for more scandalous reasons, obtained his release and was removed to the castle of Abydos, upon the Dardanelles, where he lived in luxury, and issued edicts and proclamations to his followers. He ordered, for instance, that the Jewish fast for the destruction of Jerusalem should be celebrated, henceforth, as his birthday. He also sanctified his mother's grave, making it into a place of pilgrimage for the Jews, and announced that he would be crowned king before the year was over. There can be no doubt that his imprisonment in the castle of Abydos was helping him. He was allowed to receive deputations of Jews from all parts of Europe, and the most astonishing rumours were spread abroad concerning him. The Messianic fever was at its climax. In the North of Scotland a ship had appeared with silken sails and ropes, flying the banner of King David, and manned by sailors who spoke Hebrew. This was off the Jewish-sounding Hebrides, near Lewis or Harris, which, in England, have been Jewish names.

Among the Jews who came to the castle of Abydos to see him was a certain Nehemiah ha' Cohen, a Kabbalist from Poland, who had prophesied the Messiah. They spent three days together in argument, at the end

## *Renegade*

of which Nehemiah solemnly denounced Sabbathai Zevi as an impostor. A riot began among the Sabbathaians, and in danger of his life Nehemiah snatched a turban from the head of a Turk who was standing near. By his gesture he had become a Mussulman, and they dared not touch him. Nehemiah was taken to Adrianople, where he denounced Sabbathai Zevi to the Sultan. Guidon, a renegade Jew, who under the name of Chekım Pasha was physician to the Sultan, may, at this point, have entered into a conspiracy with the Grand Mufti to deprive the Jews of their Messiah by converting him, too, to Islam. Sabbathai Zevi was brought to Adrianople, where Guidon, acting as intermediary, informed Sabbathai Zevi of the Sultan's proposal to put him to the proof by hanging him, naked, on the gallows, and having three poisoned arrows shot at him. The Sultan, Mehmet IV, if the test succeeded, would acknowledge Sabbathai Zevi as the King of Kings. The next morning he was received in audience by the Sultan, wearing a black silk robe, with a tall Jewish hat upon his head. He threw the hat upon the ground, as he came into the throne room, and taking up a turban, which a page held on a cushion, he made the gesture of his betrayer Nehemiah.

The Sultan appointed Sabbathai Zevi, at once, to be a *Capıgı Otorak* or chamberlain of the seraglio, giving him the Turkish name of Mehmet Effendi. This post carried with it a handsome salary and a uniform in the Christmas pantomime style of the Turkish court. One authority tells us that while the ex-Messiah was changing his clothes behind a screen, a pound of biscuits fell out of the back of his trousers, and suggests that this was a relic of a former fast, or in preparation for one to come. Sabbathai Zevi's conversion was, apparently, complete. He took a slave girl for wife—this was his fourth marriage—and sent for Sarah, his Polish wife, who changed her faith, readily, and became known as Fatıma Radını.

The Messianic year was not yet finished. It was only October of 1666 Nathan Ghazzati, who never ceased to believe in his Messiah, and only signed a repudiation of him under constraint, contrived to reach Adrianople, and must have had meetings with Sabbathai Zevi. He had begun converting the Jews to Islam, and received permission from the Sultan to move to Constantinople. The months passed by, and the year 1668 opened with a series of new prophecies and excuses from Sabbathai Zevi. Yet Nathan Ghazzati never failed him. He wandered through Italy, and when he died in Sofia, in 1680, was still expecting the Messiah to appear again.

For Sabbathai Zevi faded away in complete obscurity. In 1673 the Sultan had him removed from Constantinople, and he was banished to Dulcigno, a small town in Albania, near Scutari, where he died two years later. He was buried upon the seashore.

The sect of Donmehs, who are neither Jews nor Moslems, if they still survive, are an offshoot of the Sabbathaians. When his wife Sarah died, while they were in Adrianople, Sabbathai Zevi had married for the fifth time, and the founder of the Donmehs was Jacob Queredo, the brother of his last wife, who came from Salomica. This man, who called himself

## Jacob Frank

Jacob Zevi, died on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and his son Berachiah succeeded him. The Donmehs are found, in the eighteenth century, in Prague and Frankfort, and they existed, in number, in Smyrna. Curious descriptions of them are extant. They were divided into Tarpushlis, who wore a special form of turban, Cavaleros, who had peculiar pointed shoes, and, more odd still, Homosos or Camus, who could be distinguished by their flat noses.

One extraordinary fact remains to be noted. The Polish Jew Nehemiah ha' Cohen, whose denunciation was fatal to Sabbathai Zevi, became converted again to the Jewish faith, and travelled through Germany, Poland, and Holland, preaching the Messiah whom he had betrayed. He is supposed to have taken the name of Jacob Namurov, and to have wandered as a beggar. He felt that a curse was upon him. No one knows when, or where, this Wandering Jew came to his end. He is said to have died in 1682, or in 1696. But his tomb has not been found.

The remnants of the Sabbathaians, in Poland, were gathered into the Hassidim, among the followers of Rabbi Israel Ba'al Schem. But, also, they were numbered with the proselytes of Jacob Frank. This adventurer was born in Poland, and having spent the early part of his life as a distiller of brandy and fine spirits, a profession which he combined with Kabbalistic studies, passed through the Crimea, and into Turkey. He came back to Podolia, at about thirty six years of age, the climacteric of all Messiahs, but was driven out of Poland by Jew and Christian alike, and retired with his followers to Moldavia, which was then a Turkish principality. He was imprisoned, but war broke out between Russia and Turkey, the Russian armies advanced, Czentschow was captured, and Jacob Frank was released from captivity. He now began travelling through Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland, calling himself a Roman Catholic, but collecting money from the ghettos. At this point, in the words of Dean Milman, in his *History of the Jews*, 'Jacob Frank admitted the Trinity and the Incarnation of the Deity, but preserved an artful ambiguity as to the person in whom the Deity was incarnate, whether Jesus Christ, or Sabbathai Zevi.'

Later, he became a convert to Christianity, and on the strength of that moved into Western Europe, living in Vienna, in Brunn, and eventually at Offenbach, in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, surrounded by 'several hundred beautiful Jewish youth, of both sexes', riding forth in a chariot with an escort of Jewish Uhlans in red and green uniforms, frogged with gold, lances in their hands, and crests of eagles, stags, or sun and moon, for the tribes of Israel, upon their caps. According to a peculiar rite, his followers poured water over the place of his devotions. In spite of his alleged immortality, he died in 1791, the year of 'Zauberflöte'. He had ordered his following to address his beautiful daughter, Eva, as the female godhead, and she succeeded to his claims, but the wars of the French Revolution, or an increasing incredulity, diminished the revenues of the Frankists, or Zoharites, and Eva died, in neglect and poverty, in 1816.

## *Prince of the Captivity*

The portraits of Jacob Frank, with his Jewish features and wearing the fur cap of Galicia or the Bukovina, are not pleasant in expression. He was thin and sallow, with sunken chin, and our diagnosis would confirm that he suffered from catarrh or rheum, and that his incessant spitting was that of the consumptive. His talent for intrigue, and his net of secret agents, were the means by which so much wealth was conveyed to him from Eastern Europe. Long meditation upon the failure of Sabbathai Zevi, and instinct of his own, will have suggested to him that he should direct his followers towards the Roman Church and draw profit from the bait of a conversion of the Jews. Sabbathai Zevi had neither worked upon the Puritan expectation of the millennium, though it would have been easy to do so through the English and Dutch communities of Smyrna, nor exploited, as he might have done, the union of the Mohammedans and Jews. Jacob Frank was more careful, too, of his claims to be divine. His mode of life, and the status that he accorded to himself, were more those of a Prince of the Captivity than of a Messiah. It was in this guise that he dazzled Southern Germany with his retinue. Another of his borrowings from Sabbathai Zevi was the elevation of Eva, his daughter, to be a lay goddess at his side, another Venus, but, unlike Sarah, parsimonious in her favours. Jacob Frank cannot be qualified as other than a Jewish adventurer who had learned subtlety in the hard schools of the East and moved, in that knowledge, to the more ingenuous West. His coming to Germany was after the manner of one of the Dukes of the Egyptians, or first trains of the Gypsies, when they invaded Western Europe in the fifteenth century. He lived, thus, at Offenbach, or it could have been a circus stranded in that little town. Cartloads of treasure were continually brought in to him from Poland, and moneys were forwarded from his counting agents in the distant ghettos.

Probably it was the dangerous propinquity of Sabbathai Zevi, the Jew of Smyrna, if only for a few months, to the most sacred figure in religion that has caused his name to be almost forgotten. The point of interest is that Jacob Frank, after a century and more had gone by, found his memory so potent still, and should have wavered or hesitated with that name upon his lips. Some persons may have remarked that few, if any, miracles are ascribed to Sabbathai Zevi, and have wondered, therefore, how it was that he ever impressed his claims upon his contemporaries. It would only be possible to answer this in the knowledge of how soon it was that miracles were accepted in the early history of Christianity, while this, again, depends upon what importance we ascribe to miracles and whether we believe in them. For they may, in any event, seem trivial and childish by the side of wisdom. Such are rumours that spread among the ignorant. The denial of the miraculous, the contradiction of superstition, would not tarnish an immortal name. It is, even, a higher title to be the son of man than to be a spiritual being, born of God or eternity. Sabbathai Zevi, an impostor or a false Messiah, had nothing to say. He had no message. He was a Lambert Simnel, a Perkin Warbeck, compound of General Boulanger, of the claimant Naundorf, and an

## *False Messiah*

eunuch or a priest of Cybele. An Oriental from a soft city, and the most panicky part of any oriental town. The creature, or bright light of the souks and coffee houses, under the plane trees where the Orientals take their leisure.

His was a failure of personality, for he could have succeeded, even if there was nothing in what he preached. But he is to be numbered, probably, among the most extraordinary physical appearances there has ever been. We must think of him in the light of all that men of his race, or who are tinged with his blood, have accomplished in the theatre, or as interpreters of music. The very illusion of the stage, in itself, compares with the role played by the Jew in human life, for he adopts or assimilates the land in which he lives. His racial background is but little more than the actor's lodgings. In the theatre, the strength or degree of interpretation, that is to say, the accuracy of the illusion more than the historical or factual truth, is the criterion. When we write that the failure of Sabbathai Zevi was one of personality, we intend that he fell short in the climax, during the last act of the drama. Until then, his fire and temperament had moved the audience to frenzy. There are no signs of great intellect in him. He was a scholar and learned Kabbalist. It is only too evident he was no man of action. Upon no single occasion does he seem to have taken a masterly decision. Perhaps the most extraordinary event in his life was when he set off for Constantinople, on the last day, but one, before the dawn of 1666, the Messianic year. It must have seemed to him that he faced almost certain death, and at the hands of the most cruel of enemies. Was he hoping for a miracle to happen? If that was so, he must have believed in his own sanctity. For most, if not all, of the false Messiahs have been mad. In no other way is it possible to explain their actions, and their hideous deaths. But there is nothing insane in the career of Sabbathai Zevi. Neither was he of the nature of a false claimant to a throne, though there was that in him, too, for in his acts he was a historical usurper. It is to be noted that he had no rivals to dispute his claims. There were no other Messiahs in the Messianic year. A Messiah there must be, and it was Sabbathai Zevi by unanimity. He was no madman, but he was cast for a role which it was certain would be played, and he had been studying for it since childhood, and had even attempted it during the false alarm of 1648. His opportunity came eighteen years later. We do not know whether it was conveyed to him that he could escape. The Orient was full of renegades. The turban that he snatched up and put upon his head compares, in symbol, with the yacht that, true or not, lay waiting in the Thames to take Oscar Wilde away. But the impostor Sabbathai Zevi accepted the subterfuge that was offered to him.

The other phenomenon in his history is the repentance of Nehemiah, his Iscariot. Must we say that Nehemiah was a madman, too? Or did he really think that a curse was upon him for denying his master? Perhaps he remembered how long it was after the Crucifixion before the reign of Christ began, and how nearly He, too, must have seemed to be forgotten.

## *The Wandering Jew*

But Nehemiah ha' Cohen was a Jew, and not a Christian, as the Apostles were all born Jews. His instinct or conscience told him he had been concerned in extraordinary events, of which the end was not in sight, and which might become immortal. The Jews had been all but united. Sabbathai Zevi had failed, but so, where an earthly career was concerned, had the founder of Christianity. It was too soon to tell. At least, there had been nothing comparable in modern times. The opportunity had come, and gone. Sabbathai Zevi had, probably, hypnotic or thaumaturgic powers. He died in obscurity, but time would resuscitate his fame. Or else Nehemiah was a remote fanatic, a madman of that sort who confess to crimes they have not committed, and are sometimes hung for it.

But such is a curious end to an unconvincing story. In fact, the secret must lie in the person and appearance of Sabbathai Zevi. There is no other explanation. And, probably, in his oratory or power of speech. He should be compared with the Tribune Rienzi. Not seldom, fame which comes from words ends in ignominy. It should be considered, even though it wounds certain susceptibilities to think of this, that for a Messiah to be put to death is as much of a blow to his disciples as that he should take such an extreme and unpremeditated step as to give his allegiance to another faith. For that, at least, left him alive and able, if he had the subtlety, to continue his argument, and even, in some sort, to give new directions to his followers. The other was the end, utter and irrevocable. There is a host of martyrs. But the strength emanating from their bones, or ashes, is in the mass, and not individual. Another martyr is but one more added. The living world is but touched, in imagination, by the fingers of the dead. There can be no proofs that are more tangible than the markings of a hand. Perhaps, after all, the Messiah had come at the appointed time, and been dispossessed, and died. It would be necessary, probably, to be imbued with the devout Jew's attitude towards the founder of Christianity in order to realize what it portended to Nehemiah, a Jew of Poland, that he should admit this Messiah and preach him to the end of his days. But probably, also, we impute too much honour to a crooked brain. Could we see his origins, among moneylenders and vendors of second-hand clothing in the worst slums of Eastern Europe, we should know more of the permutations of his soul. This fanatic, who could have been the Wandering Jew in person, had vowed to die before the gates of Jerusalem, and it may be that he fulfilled his promise.

His master lies in his grave at Dulcigno, a little Albanian village with a fine name in the former Montenegro. Before this war, in Yugoslavia. Not far off there is Netzun, another village on the seashore, which has a population composed entirely of negroes, the descendants of Turkish slaves or mercenaries. A little and poor tekké or monastery of the Mevlevi dervishes, in their tall white caps, looks down upon the Adriatic, along this coast. It would be interesting to know what legends, if any, are in being about this grave. Sabbathai Zevi would be buried, we imagine, under his Moslem name of Mehmet Effendi. Is there a tombstone with

### *An English sportsman*

a stone turban to mark his body? But it is more likely to have been a little square building with a dome above it, after the pattern of the tombs of the marabouts in North Africa. Only occasionally, we are told, a Moslem came to pray before it.

At long interval a Venetian galley would pass by, upon the horizon, on her way to Corfu, to Zante, or to Cephalonia. After another century, a stray English sportsman would come ashore from a little boat and go shooting for wild duck. The little square building was the tomb of a forgotten saint or holy man. No one, traveller or countryman, could know upon what dangerous ground, potentially, he was treading, or that books and pamphlets, rushed from the printing presses in the heat of the moment, had appeared in most of the capitals of Europe with the imminent Messiah as their subject. English, French, Dutch, Venetian, and other ambassadors, had sent report of him. Had his kingdom on earth been set up, we may be certain he would have perished in a scuffle. But, then, what legends would have sprung up! The whole fabric of religion might have been torn to pieces, for it was a subject which would affect, eventually, Jew, Christian, and Mohammedan, alike. This could have been the most famous man since ancient history. But he was a false Messiah, and not an Anti-Christ.



Shabbethai Zebi in Festive Attire  
(from an old print.)

## Book Seven

# ORPHEUS AND HIS LYRE

### 1. Hurdygurdy

**T**his is to be a musical experience without parallel. All, who would listen, must come with us to a town consisting of a wretched street, a mile long, unpaved, and very wide. A Jewish town, entirely, to judge by the inhabitants. We will, even, give its name. It is Mohilev, in White Russia, upon the far or left bank of the Dniester.

There are no roads or railways. It is 1835, and all countrymen, over a certain age, still think and talk of Napoleon and his pride and fall. The Poles, who form a large part of the population, and are the peasantry and gentry, look upon him as their saviour. The Russians only recall the barbarity of their own sufferings, and how the Cossacks slew with sword and lance and set fire to buildings where the French wounded lay. That was twenty years ago. What everyone remembers is the cold and hunger.

Meanwhile, the past has slipped back again. That means, for many of those concerned, a subsistence that is little better than starvation. It is as if, and there may be comfort for us in this parallel, the tyrant, or hero, had struck a sudden and murderous blow, without warning, and been driven reeling back into the snows. But, in fact, it is again as it used to be. Only with burned villages, where the war has been, and many men maimed.

But, come, walk into the town. It is an October evening. We have passed a row of windmills. For the wind blows here out of China and Tibet. There is nothing to prevent it. Much else, besides, comes out of that limitless distance. We meet great waggons driven by men in long gowns with long beards. Shall we say the snow is falling? No! the sky is the colour of the cheeks of green apples.

The houses are one-storeyed and like the shacks of mining towns. Only old and dilapidated when new built. Of grey wood and plaster brightened with flat paints. Each house is a shop and has its goods for sale. In some, the oil lamp is already burning in the dark back room. But the peasant population cannot read or write. For their sakes there are shop signs all along the street. A great jackboot, of rusty iron, a long shirt or caftan made of tin, the barber's cup for bleeding, a golden bowl or pestle for the apothecary, a gilded fish, a gilded goose, all tarnished, how they must crank and rattle upon a windy night! If you walked here, under a stormy moon, you might imagine these to be the creaking trumpets of the rag fair. For, in fact, there is little for sale that is not second-hand.

But it is the busiest hour. There has been rain, and the street has big puddles that reflect the sky. Nevertheless, men dash from one side to the other, ankle deep in mud, holding live chickens, but half starved, or



## *Top hat and tails*

mended garments. If a coin were dropped, it would sink into the mire. No one could find it. But they are so poor they live by barter. A peasant brings a few eggs or a dried fish and, in return, takes away a cup or plate or printed handkerchief. The traders or pedlars are all dressed in black, with high boots, and fur caps, but their gabardine is soiled and green with age. For the number of its houses the town is swarming with inhabitants. The children are their parents, in little, dressed no differently, and the boys wear the same black curls below their ears. Some, though, are red haired, and show the Tartar in their cheek-bones. The red bearded Jews, who are always tall and thin, are like the magician in a fairy tale. Or like the wicked uncle in the pantomime.

This enormous population is so miserable that it longs to move. Not that it has ever known a settled home. Is it the Tartar strain in them that makes them nomads, only wandering from town to town? They are swarming, like the ants. When they are ready, and when the barriers are down, they will migrate to Vienna, to Berlin, to Whitechapel, to America. If we could see this town towards the end of the nineteenth century, a particular horror might attach in our minds to some of the Jews, red bearded ones among them, who, above their top boots and tattered coats, wear a tall silk hat, tilted back above their ritual curls. It is the top hat of the age of prosperity, of the bank and stock exchange, worn jauntily, could we forget the fox, the showman, the wizard in the children's story, and implying no more than that the wearer looked forward and saw himself on Broadway or in the Mile End Road.

No sign of that, this evening. The secret police will but herd them towards the Austrian or Polish frontiers. And leave them there to starve, or pick a living up out of the gutter. Where were their ancestors a hundred or two hundred years before? We do not know. Spread everywhere from Lithuania to the Crimea. The red ants driven before the swarming black ants, that is all. Swarming, and then migrating, like the lemmings. Driven on by their misery, and in the end, into the emigrant ship. But not yet. Not for another human generation. Some of these children whom we see this evening will take their families to America. But, until middle age, they will live upon the serfs, and pick up their living second-hand.

Down to the left, beyond the houses, flows the Dniester. Through the empty plain. This is so huge that in the distance it is another colour. Here, it is like mud, desiccated, but bleaching grey for winter. Far off, as though from every weed upon its surface, it is a velvety or mossy green, rubbed thin. Deep down runs the river, very broad and slow. I have seen it, sixty miles higher, at Hotin, which is a slum, not a town of Jews, in Romania, upon the other or near bank of the Dniester. and at Mohilev it will be no different. It flows quietly, for it is very deep. Suddenly, the town ends, there is a steep drop, and the river flows below.

We pass soldiers in their long grey coats wandering stupidly, in amazement, even in Mohilev, for they are moupks out of the Northern birch forests and have only known the wooden towns. They are conscripts and

## *The squab*

may never get back to their homes It must be a market day. The peasants are spending their money But the black gowned Jews outnumber them And it is the Jews who go hungry The peasants are well fed But it is as though the whole town is too poor to afford a light And it has grown darker You can catch the sunset in the pools of rain. Lamps are lit, at last, and they must be naphtha flares, here and there, when the light can shine on tin or china or cheap enamel Where obscurity helps business, there is no light at all

We have the feeling that we are many miles from home It would be a nightmare to have to sleep here on a filthy floor, and we are to imagine that we shall return, before it is too late, to a small manor or country house a few miles away where we shall sup on beetroot soup, thick with cream, on partridges from the October woods, and the sharp berries of the season, and afterwards, round the wood stove, listen to music, and talk of our extraordinary experience We do not live here, but are foreigners, travelling, perhaps, to Kiev or the new city of Odessa, handed on from country house to country house, in the manner of that day, journeying like Lamartine, who had the same adventure as ourselves, and described it Perhaps the confidence of that safe comfort at the end of the day helps us to exaggerate the squalor of the scene Were we forced to spend the night in it we must shut our eyes to the shades and undertones of this remote and miserable slum

Was anyone happy or contented? We see characters who could be Jewish comedians, and many others from the Yiddish theatre, where, it could be said, genius is often hidden under grease paint Here and now, in embryo, for their opportunity has not dawned Remember, this is a hundred years ago! Probably, in any such community of black gowned men, there must be those who can mimic, or create character For they never come out of it into the fields It is as far as they go if they are seen at the edge of the beet fields, bargaining, where the black raven hops Where the magpie flies off They are never to be seen digging, harvesting, nor herding You will see a black gowned man riding on a peasant's waggon, and it means that he has possession of the peasant's holding They are, eternally, the middlemen They buy up the eggs, they do not set the hens A Jewish child is never goosegirl Rather, they are the sparrows, the mice, the rodents of the town In big cities they congregate in dark cellars, where mushrooms might grow They do not spend money on the exterior of their houses But, in fact, in this town they are so miserably poor they have nothing to spend at all

The children of the Jews are curiously bird-like in their similarity Palely precocious, and at the age when their features alter, it is to be felt of them that they are only growing into the plumage and physiognomy that is natural to them The lamb turns into the sheep, or the squab with its huge beak and scraggy neck becomes the painted pigeon But, in their early youth, it is as though they might turn into something different And so it is with the ringleted children of the Jews

Mohilev is a town in which to search for musical or dramatic talent A

## *The Rand*

town of many towns, for their frontier extends from Wilno to the Golden Chersonese. It is enough if, in one place, there should be a Menuhin. Yet how could there be a chance of that? At this moment they are imprisoned in the ghettos. They are fermenting, seething, boiling, in their slums. For, where this race dwells, there are always slums. There are never the carved and painted wooden houses of the peasants. Those rustic houses are like wooden boxes. Their eaves are carved with the fretsaw, and then painted. The peasants walk like peacocks in their embroidery. Could we see a village on a wedding day the headdresses of the young girls would be like the crowns of princesses in a fairy story. Their kakochniks or bridal crowns are in a hundred patterns according to locality, a Northern Orient in which the women go unveiled. But the Jews, by comparison, never beautify their houses nor their persons. They are nomads of the unpaved streets. Of the back rooms. And, in big towns, of the basements. As middlemen and sellers of second-hand clothing their trade is drabness. Their racial instinct is the quick return. They move from one town to another town, but it becomes the same. Yet it is impossible not to pity them. Deep in themselves they are discontented, dreaming of New York or Johannesburg, of Broadway or the Rand. As yet, unheard of, but they feel that in their bones.

But Mohilev, or Hotin, a hundred years ago! The carriage wheels sink up to their axles in the mud and filth. It could not, properly, be described as mud. For mud is formed from soil or humus. It should have clay or chalk in it. But this is the dust made liquid and coagulated. The accumulation, down the years, of animal and vegetable detritus. Grey with poverty, and swollen with cabbage stalks, with garbage, and the nameless refuse of the drains and sewers. Which, in Mohilev, are the gutters and the whole width of the slimy, pullulating street, that seems to flow with mucus, with expectoration. There is the knowledge, here, which it is impossible to suppress in our minds, that their food is slaughtered in another way. It is the sign of their religion. Perhaps the Kosher slaughter house may be more merciful than the poleaxe of the peasant, but we think of the Jews, in imagination, sitting down to milk-white veal, bled white and pale, according to their ritual. There are tanneries in Mohilev, and we smell the hides and skins. But the carriage step is put down and we must walk across that open sewer. For a little time it is impossible to look up, until we are so muddled that it does not matter. Then the swarming misery takes possession. And we hear the shop signs swinging in the wind. Idly, idly, like men hung in irons upon the gallows tree.

What can be the average of life in Mohilev? Many children, and little babes, must die. There are many old men, who have flourished like the weeds. In stony places. Or rather, in between the stones. Except that here are no stones. The shacks are built of wood and plaster. But there are funguses that grow upon old bits of wood, and there is the mildew that spreads upon the plaster. How else could they live? They have crept in between the bricks. They have sprouted in the crevices. They crawl forth into the grey light of Mohilev, and go back again.

## *Flight of starlings*

For all its vitality this town is inanimate and imprisoned in the past. The Jews are so orthodox and conservative. To-night, as we see them, it is a mediaeval ghetto. The barriers are still up. The world is not yet open. There are no hospitals. What happens to the sick and ill? For an answer, come to the crowded cemeteries. Count the Jewish headstones. There are many, here, with more room space than they had in life. They lie, at last, in their own beds, and have not to seek their living. In the distance there are the golden domes of the Russian churches. Not in Mohilev, but in the villages upon the plain. This flowerless mud is neighbour to the orchard and the grove of birch trees. The priest and the Rabbi pass by upon the street. The one is an ignorant and drunken peasant, the other, bred for generations in the slums. But his roots are in the earth, while the Jewish Rabbi is like the weed upon the wall. His community are of their own planting, without invitation, and can be uprooted. But, like the weeds, they seed themselves anew. They spring up in waste places, and choke the sunflowers near the peasants' cabins.

Nor weed, nor sunflower has any colour, here and now. It is autumn, and the sunflower rattles its dead leaves. The plant is withered to an iron skeleton, an iron standard which has been hit and twisted, scorched, even, and the tin head droops, for it is like a head of painted tin, until you touch it. Here and there, the heads have fallen, burnt out by their own flames in the summer. The yellow corolla has gone black. By that curious alteration in dead things, if you pick up a dead sunflower, it is flat and heavy, a wadded or stuffed disk, that is all, and then the seeds drop from their cells, and we have that analogy which we noticed in another place with the dead flies of the window casement, with the smoked out wasps' nest, or, in our time, with the radiator of the wrecked motor car, or the shattered aeroplane of modern wars. So much for the dead sunflowers of the backyard. They are the roses of the Ukrainian gardens.

A child comes by holding a bunch of weeds, like groundsel. Probably he has a lunnet in a little cage. Another may feed a crust of rye bread to a whiskered mouse. Childrens' games go on. But the mud is too thick to trundle a hoop or spin a top. They have to be games of guessing, or little riddles. You would not find the wooden hobbyhorse. But the children are starlings if their elders are the crows. They gather, we mean, in the branches of a tree. You hear a hundred voices chirping, all together. Or so it seems. They are collected together at the corner of the street. And they dart off with a movement of a hundred pairs of wings, and dipping, all together, cut another angle, and are gone. They are round the corner, out of sight, or but a few steps in front of us, and then are gone again. So it is in autumn fields, and in the hedges. Soon they will be gone altogether, to another clime.

But it is a hundred years ago. The old evening darkens. Down towards the sunset, it fades like a sheet of red-hot metal. Tighter, tighter, into darkness, like the turnings of a screw. That is how it fades. We will not have it that it is quite dark. The huge plain is so empty that the dark will

## *The dulcimer*

come up, all at once The wind, blowing towards the sunset in the West, comes from unknown lands in the utter distance Here are no safe woods and covers It is because of this such cruel things have happened in their history We have not had the Tartars on the plains, or the winds out of the North and East From the tundra, where mammoths are found in the cold cliffs of the river Or listen to it! blowing from all imaginable Orients, in semitones and quartertones beaten with the palm of the hand upon the sheepskin drum

Could it be music that we hear? Ah! it must be ancient music of the dulcimer, and a thrilling and strange excitement seizes us because of the sunset and the fever in the air It is not the mouth organ, nor the street violin There could not be pavement music in this far off town, so long ago Yet they must be street musicians It sounds like a little band of instruments that accompany peculiar and special tones Ah! it is nothing. Do not listen so intently! But we have known a hurdygurdy bring magic into a London slum We cannot help but listen who are the slaves of music This does not turn and grind It is not music of the handle It is not mechanical What can it be? For it begins again Now harsh and vibrant, and then melting That is the mystery of music, for this is of the sort that suddenly intoxicates It steals upon the senses It does not work immediately and at once, though that can happen, but not here and now For we heard it in the distance We must come nearer in order to be entranced To the next street corner, hurrying reluctant, for the dread of disappointment But it begins to assert itself Oh! stop still and listen It is a peculiar instrument we have never heard before or not played in this manner For those are the hands of genius There is no faltering The notes break or impact in their peculiar way because it is an instrument, half harmonica, half dulcimer, akin to the cymbalom, and its special qualities are described in the word *claquebois* Listen! listen! the like of it will be heard no more For this is the transcendental player Probably the greatest, untaught musician there has ever been Upon an ancient, rough instrument of which he is the virtuoso He is, in fact, playing in the street

What we see is a bearded man in a long black caftan, seated at his instrument in the middle of a crowd His foxskin cap is on the ground Behind him, four men, much alike, as though they are his brothers or near relations, hold their violins and basses ready When we come up, he is sitting with half-closed eyes, waiting for inspiration Then he looks down at his dulcimer, and tests it by preluding upon the strings During the course of this we feel that he has seen us He draws us, by that, into the orbit of his hypnotism, although it was not a direct glance, but he has taken notice of the strangers, and allows time for the drug to work A moment, also, for us to stare at the extraordinary appearance of this man of genius He lifts his head and gazes into the air again, then, with a sudden movement raises both arms, and looking down at the dulcimer, brings down both hands in unison, and strikes with the pair

## *The Chinese scale*

of hammers together. The four musicians take their cue from him, and follow.<sup>1</sup>

This Jewish musician is Michael Joseph Gusikov, but, before we remove him into a room (his own bedroom), a concert hall, an opera house, or to anywhere else that we should like to hear him, and attempt to explain his untutored genius and the extraordinary effect it had upon his listeners, we should look at him again. He wore, always, the clothes of the wandering Jewish musician of his land. Because he was that, by profession. The fact of the many distinguished persons he had met, made no difference to him. He wore the beard of the Russian Jew, looked poor, and, indeed, was very poor. He has the sunken cheeks and high cheekbones of the Slav, and is very pale. In fact, he is dying of consumption.

This is his history. He was born at Sklot, a little town near Mohilev, where his family had been musicians for upwards of a hundred years. His father played the cymbalom, or dulcimer, an instrument with cords of metal which were struck with a pair of hammers, and which was in use among the Jews of Russia and Poland. At the age of seventeen he was married, according to Jewish custom. He could not read a note of music, but learned several instruments, and played at weddings and village dances, and made occasional, short journeys to Moscow. Soon after he was twenty years old, he could play the flute, his chief instrument, no more because of his consumption, which gave him fearful fits of coughing, and made it painful for him to draw in his breath. This disaster plunged his family into misery and starvation.

But, in this mortal predicament, Gusikov, who was formed by nature to be a great musician, set to work to make a musical career possible for himself. For this purpose he chose a musical instrument of the street or village fair, and resolved to introduce such improvements into its tone and range as would make it capable of the most subtle shades of execution and interpretation. This instrument, called *Jerova I Salomo* by the Jewish peoples, was of most ancient origin and may have come from classical China and India and their schools of music, but the use of it had spread in mediaeval times among the Tartars, the Cossacks, the Russians, the Lithuanians, and as far as Poland. It was formed, somewhat after the manner of a marimba, out of a number of slats or strips of pinewood upon a bed of straws, struck, we would imagine, as though it were a clavichord, but capable of a deeper and louder tone than that because it was a bigger instrument, and, in any case, played with a pair of hammers like a cymbalom. Originally, this instrument was tuned upon the major or Chinese scale.

Gusikov increased the number of the strips of pinewood to two and a

<sup>1</sup> Bihary or Czermak were alternative in my mind to Gusikov for this study of illiterate or instinctive music. But the material and background of the Hungarian *Tzigane* are well known, by now, and also, even from the meagre accounts that are left of him, it will be apparent that the Russian Jew was the greater player. Probably, indeed, the most wonderful genius of his kind there has ever been.

## Untaught musician

half octaves, disposed chromatically, not in the order, alternatively, of semitones, but arranged in a particular way in order to facilitate his execution. He contrived to isolate the vibrations of the wooden notes, and make them more powerful in tone. Three years were spent by Gusikov, from 1831, in perfecting his instrument. But, at length, his preparations were complete, and in July 1834 he set forth with his four brothers or relatives to Kiev and to Odessa, where he performed in the opera house and was heard by the violinist Lipinski, who has left an account of him. At this time he was heard, also, by Lamartine, who was travelling through Southern Russia. It was due in large part to the encouragement of Lipinski that Gusikov undertook his journey to Western Europe, appearing with wild success in Vienna, in Milan, in Germany, in Paris, and in Brussels, where his health completely broke down, and it was evident that he was dying. And he died at Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1837, at thirty years of age, when about to start upon his journey home.

The repertoire of this transcendental player consisted entirely of Russian, Polish, and Jewish popular melodies and folk tunes. Further accounts of his genius are given by Mendelssohn, who heard him play in Germany, and by Fétis, the musical biographer, who made friends with him, saw him continually during the four months that he was ill in bed in Brussels, and dying, and took down from him, personally, the facts and details of his life. Fétis gives a warning that his description of Gusikov, short though it be, is genuine and authentic, and will be found different in some respects from others. He must be referring to the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaud, which claims personal knowledge of Gusikov but gives a ridiculous account of him, and is responsible for the sensational story according to which Gusikov died in the concert room at Aix-la-Chapelle, upon the platform, in the act of finishing his recital. He claims, also, that Gusikov could read music, that he was well known in Italy as a virtuoso, and that a concerto written by him for clarinet was given with great success in the San Carlo theatre at Naples. The truth is that Gusikov was entirely obscure and had never performed outside his native Russia until he came to Western Europe a year or two before he died. In the end, Michaud describes the instrument of his invention, or perfection, as being of the nature of a harmonica or xylophone. Michaud, it is evident, was unmusical and insensitive. It is better to trust to the musician Fétis, to Lipinski, to Mendelssohn, to Lamartine. All these are agreed upon his genius. According to them, Gusikov was of the sort that appears once, and for ever, and is gone.

We are in the presence of, probably, the greatest untaught or impromptu musician there has ever been. But, in fact, this description is not accurate. For he was a musician by heredity, while no one who could play upon his variety of instruments, and could devote three years of his life to the perfecting of so special and subtle an instrument as that upon which he made his fame could be called unskilled. Gusikov was a musician in the mediæval or oriental meaning of the word. He could not read

## *Tunes of the Fair*

music, and it was not necessary. Indeed, it was not written down. The music he played was composed by instinct and instilled by ear. It would never be charged against the poets of the sagas, of the old epics, or the ballads, that they could not read or write. It was their particular poetry, and it even gained because of its special conditions or restrictions. The poems lost nothing in beauty or subtlety because they had to be got by ear. In the same way, folk music, epical or lyrical, in its hundred sorts, loses nothing because it has not the sophistication of print and paper. Rather, the opposite. It loses when it is written down. Many of its nuances may be impossible to transcribe, while performance from the printed copy, in the concert hall or music room, must lack the fire and vitality of the original. Street music, if divinely inspired, or the music of the fair, indeed, all popular music when it bears the marks of genius, spoils and tarnishes at the hands of those who have been trained in schools.

Circumstances, of race and environment, brought it about that the airs played by Gusikov were music of the street, more than of the mountains or the plain. Hurdygurdy tunes, coming out of nowhere, such as would be heard in little towns, together with the grand or epical embodiments of nationality, for this is one of the regions of the world where folk music is part of the history of the land. The focus for these tunes was the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, six hundred miles to the East, upon the Volga. Most of them anonymous, of unknown origin. But Gusikov will have brought back with him, too, the popular airs of Moscow. He will have gone to hear the Gypsies who made their living by singing and dancing in the guingettes and caf  s-chantants of the suburbs, and who sang both in their own language and in Russian. He will play the germs, or first ideas, of many tunes we know, together with airs of Tartar or even Mongol origin. Polish and Jewish tunes from the fairs of Poland and Lithuania. Some, also, which approach the Hungarian, and could be mistaken for Hungarian airs. The true historical analogy of Gusikov is, of course, to the bards or rhapsodists of Russia in the Middle Ages, and he represents a survival of this into modern times, but in conditions made exceptional by his peculiar genius, by his special instrument, and by the flowering of his talent due to the consumption that killed him young.

But enough of this.

We watch him putting his instrument together, in public, before his audience. He does this in order to show how simple are the means from which he draws such great effects. In the same way a magician demonstrates how much he can do with nothing. For his instrument is only a dulcimer of wooden slats or notes lying upon ropes of straw. But they are strung or balanced with the extreme of care, almost as though the instrument is made anew each time he plays upon it.

His black caftan is like a primitive form of the frock coat of the virtuoso. It accentuates his thinness. We notice the pallor of his face, and the habitual cast of melancholy upon his features. He never smiles. We wonder,



## *Waltz of the Balagan*

having heard him in the distance, and by rumour, what the character of his music will be. For his face is utterly impassive. And, according to the nature of the airs he plays, we shall hear him in the street at Mohilev, or in the humble bedroom where he died.

Now he begins to tune the notes and strike them with his fingers, listening in rapt attention, and then again, as though disdainful or indifferent. Those are moods of creation. He takes up the hammers, and now he plays a prelude, but only to test his instrument. It is a sip or taste of the intoxicating liquor. There comes another preluding, this time for display of speed and power, a sweep of all the notes at full force, dying away pianissimo, so that the whole of his magical world lies open in its strangeness from end to end, as it were, from masculine to feminine, in tones that we have never heard before, deep and angry, but fading into enchantment among the strands of straw.

But he breaks off, suddenly, and lifts both hammers into the air. It is the beginning. He brings down his hands together, and strikes with both hammers, this time in a tremendous shake or rattle. It is the typical opening with the cymbalom, a sort of throbbing or quivering like the swaying of the python, a shivering from head to foot, even as when the priestess of the oracle, who has bathed her body and her hair in the waters of the Castalian fountain, shakes the sacred laurel tree and eats the leaves with which she crowns herself. In fact, it is to give a moment for the narcotic to get to work, and it is succeeded by a pause which is indescribable in excitement while he waits again, with uplifted hands, and then begins, softly, to play one of the tunes of the Balagan.

A little, early, hurdygurdy waltz.

They are the tunes belonging to the painted wooden booths that were set up, on public holidays and festivals, for the performance of strolling players. The booths used to spring up in a night in the square of the Admiralty, at St. Petersburg, for the Mid-Lent Fair. During the rest of the year the actors toured the country. There were Balagan, too, in Moscow. And they came to every small provincial town. But the fascination of the Balagan consisted in the prodigious talent of its performers. There were Italian and French dancers who were in actual descent from the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and families, like the forebears of the Legat brothers, who were to become famous in the Russian theatre. But the French or Italian genius had become acclimatized. We can only trace its origins in the skill with which the wooden booths are painted, and in some of the characters of the pantomime. Also, in the music. For that is in the Russian idiom, but now and then, as in this little waltz, taking on a foreign form. It is, indeed, not far removed from the simple waltzes or ländler of Haydn, such a tune as, sometimes, forms the trio in the minuet of a symphony, but composed on this occasion for a musical clock, shall we say, and taken from that, or the mechanical organ, to the Russian fair ground. Then born anew, and become the waltz of the Balagan, upon the hurdygurdy.

Shrill notes are mingled with it, as when the ballerina dances while she

## *The flaxen wig*

plays a bugle. It is not so much that the tune is mechanical as that it is a primitive waltz, in wooden or archaic form, turning, turning, within a little space. Written, where, and by whom? No one knows. Where they make the hurdygurdies. But it has been altered a little in order to fit it to that wooden box upon a stick, and the changed notes have given it the Russian nationality and idiom. Is it our imagination? Can it be but the creaking music of the hurdygurdy that is identical in every slum? How appropriate upon the straufiedel or cymbalom! Listen! listen! it is the Balagani in every wooden bone. It plays in slums and below the painted palaces. Young persons walk here with their governesses, and carriages come by, painted green, with outriders and postillions in scarlet cloaks. They halt for a few moments, and drive on. But, chiefly, this waltz is an interior drama, within the wooden walls. Open, in front. Taken down, and put up again, on all the fair grounds. And it ends, as abruptly as it began.

But the musician has not changed his mood. With no longer pause than for another tune to come, he gives us one of the gods of comedy, descended to the muddy street, among the litter of the crowd. Standing on the boards, outside the frame, in the light of afternoon. For a moment only, and then he leaps on to the stage. But we see him by the wooden arch which imitates the colonnade. He has altered much from Bologna or Bergamo. For he is neither Pierrot, quite, nor Harlequin. He has the flaxen, peasant hair, the linen shirt of the moujik, the linen trousers, and the Russian boots. Perhaps you would only know he was a personage of comedy from his collar, which is like a ruff, and from his wig, and painted cheeks. But none of the characters drink wine from a straw fiasco. They drink raw spirit. Their simulated drunkenness is more heavy and animal. Such is their metamorphosis amid the white lights of the North. We know that in the music. We can hear it.

And, preluding softly, he plays a tune that is entirely Russian in accent, a popular song. This he might play, in bed and ill, with his instrument upon his knees, as Fétis heard him in his room in Brussels. For it requires no execution, but the expression lies in its poignant phrases. None the less, we are in Mohulev in the open street.

Ah! this is different and nearer to the bone. Those others had wooden bones. But this is flesh and bone, or, at least, it bleeds. How can it be that this bare simplicity has such effect? For it is the bare bones of music. You can listen, and wonder how the heart beats in it. If he plays it once, or twice, or three times, it may resolve itself into mere notes at first or second hearing. That is the mystery of music. It may be the guile of the virtuoso to allow it to be bloodless, once, and let it drop, lifeless and uninhabited, into your hands. Or it can be your own fault. But it returns. And, this time, it may miss another of the listeners and be dead and lifeless to his ears. Such are the cold hours of music. The chill dawn. This is when he strikes to light a fire. But it catches. The sparks begin to kindle. The next time, the blood begins to flow. We get the sacred tingling of the skin. The god comes down to earth and there is magic in the air. In the

## *The Mesmerist*

streets of Mohilev No one moves It is impossible to stir or speak It is too strong and overpowering, even in its weakness and simplicity And what is it? Ah! no one can tell There must be something animal in us that is entranced by music. A dumb nature, of which this is the word

But he puts down the pair of hammers These are but preludes to test the instrument

For a few moments he tunes the notes, while two of his band of musicians kneel beside him, and without a word from him, repair the slats of wood and tighten them in order that they should take the greater strain that he will put upon them It is, even, necessary that he should begin softly, but his months and years of practice while he made the instrument and perfected it have taught him how to strengthen his tone At first, it is no louder than a virginal or glass harmonica, partaking of both natures, if that be possible, and intended, therefore, for effects of infinite subtlety and concentration, like the music of a world in little, all things in proportion, so that a street song is the whole of ragged poverty in the motes of dust, that glitter, and the entire theatre and its actors are in a wooden booth that is no bigger than the hurdygurdy You hold the stick in one hand, and turn the handle with the other And, thus, you move with slow steps along the slums

But we are to hear his instrument, like the cymbalom, lead the other instruments It is tuned, now, and upon its mettle Even the notes that he touches with his finger have the heroic twang It is the dulcimer of Asia, no more, in little, the music of the Balagan! No more, the hurdygurdy We are to hear tunes that have come, at a horse's pace, across the plains From both the sunrise and the sunset Part of the thrill of excitement is the pause and the anticipation, and he knows, cunningly, how to play upon this By making another adjustment at the last moment, when all was ready for him to pick up the pair of hammers and begin Almost as though he wants a little time in which to mesmerize his audience There are virtuosi of the concert platform who achieve this by looking round among their auditors It was said of Liszt, by one who heard him 'He knows well the influence he has on people for he always fixes his eye on some one of us when he plays, and I believe he tries to wring our hearts

He subdues the people to him by the very way he walks on to the stage' But the musician whom we see before us now hypnotizes by being impassive and expressionless He has long hair and a long black robe, and looks straight down in front of him In fact, the pause is for his personality to impress itself This strange being, nurtured in poverty and misery, and belonging in dress and appearance to the ghettos of the Middle Ages, who played at dances and village weddings, is the genius of untaught and instinctive music He attacks the heart and blood more than the brain He entrances, and then intoxicates

The moment has come

Lifting the pair of hammers, so that we see his wide sleeves tied at the wrists, he pauses, to get the time, and strikes the bass notes, which roll like kettledrums It is another instrument altogether The loud and

## 'The Stork'

resonant dulcimer, rattling, rolling, in announcement For this is how the cymbalom begins, imposing silence

But his hammers run right up the instrument and, dividing, perform another shake, in bass and treble, both together, and still louder, and then, in short runs or rhapsodic openings, drumming fortissimo, with full force of both hammers, up and down the whole gamut of the notes, display the two and a half octaves, from end to end Then, joining together, with both hammers upon the middle notes of the keyboard, he gives a last great shake or rattle to the cymbalom, and the prelude ends with single, struck notes, in both directions, that give forth the masculine physique, the male architecture of the dance

Now it comes In a short stabbing phrase, slow and solemn, rattling from end to end, with another shake, and another phrase that bows low, as in the genuflection of the dance, quickening, ever so little, then slowing down to the formal conclusion The other instruments come in It is the Ukrainian tune, 'The Stork',<sup>1</sup> and now, softly and swiftly, the dance begins, as though with every kind of step worked into it, in endless variation, with fresh entrances, ever quicker, quicker, gathering as it goes This he does with but half the force of the dulcimer, for the point is speed and nimbleness But the major opening returns We listen, unwilling to move or stir, to this most intoxicating of dances there has ever been And the tune comes back, turning upon itself, faster, faster, and dies away, in magic, into the body of the dulcimer

With only the interval of a moment, as though the dazzling effects of his preluding were necessary no more, he begins to play an air of different character He contrives that his instrument should imitate the plucked strings of the guslee. He gives us the music of the Kalieki and Kasiteli, street singers, beggars, mostly, and those who sing in chorus, on the pilgrimages It is an archaic music, grand and primitive, like the sweeping of many harps Dating from an age when music was near to plain chant Religious in tone, but with the nip of strong drink in it This is music of the great rivers and the plain, Dniester, Dnieper, Don, and Volga, but the next tune comes from the birch forests, because it is less assured and more credulous The horizon is hidden by the trees, but the tune is fanatical in meaning Probably a hymn of the Raskolniki, or Old Believers, even of those who have been driven from their homes to the Arctic shores and call themselves Pomortsy, or dwellers by the sea For there are Old Believers in this part of Russia, too, not far from Mohulev, and their religious choruses are characteristic of them

Next, we have a curious Chassidic tune, one of the ecstasies of the Chassidim This is a sensual poem, of many thrusting ornaments and regurgitations, but in the Babylonian mode, it might be, so obscure and ancient is its form Passionate, though, and ecstatic, more physical, or

<sup>1</sup> This Ukrainian dance, 'The Stork', was used by Tchaikowsky for the finale of his second symphony It is among the most thrilling movements in all music, but, of course, altered or adapted by the composer from its original form

## *Ciganje*

indeed, sexual than any other music, for it translates so easily into symbolism, and the flowers are ugly. Thus, Rabbi Israel Ba'al Schem, in his white robe, walked with his humble disciples in the Tatra hills, and it was the first time that the Jewish nation had invoked the trees and fields. After this, a wailing lamentation, then, the blowing of the shofar, or ram's horn trumpet, and he plays a Hebrew melody which could be of any place or time.

The secret of these extraordinary performances of natural music must be, in part, because the dulcimer is an unaccustomed instrument to our ears. This music would be prosaic on the piano or violin. But it has been necessary to create for it a vehicle which is capable of the highest degree of virtuosity. This is no simple dulcimer, the secret of it died with Guskov. It is, of course, remarkable that a dying man should be possessed, physically, of such powers of execution. The reason is that nervous energy need not fail until the end. Perhaps, also, where it is an instance of tuberculosis, the very nature of that disease makes it that the powers or faculties of display are retained by the dying man, till long after they are any good to him. Certainly his feverish or febrile health affects his genius. We should never hear another performance that is like this. A healthy man, it may be, would not be capable of these superb strengths and subhuman subtleties. The gradations of tone are exaggerated to the point of being drugged. It is when a musician of genius throws the whole of his nervous and physical life into his music that such effects are possible. We shall see how quickly he can intoxicate, and, in another moment, make us weep.

But he is, again, the musician of the rustic dance and village wedding. What can be the history of these melodies? Are they composed by any one person, or do they take shape, imperceptibly, as they travel, and are they the work of many hands? For the same tune alters as it goes. It can be found in different villages in another version. It can be like the same story with a different ending. This changes its meaning. But the lesson of that has not been lost upon the virtuoso.

Looking up, for a moment, from his instrument, he begins a simple, poignant tune. It is compact and square, and whatever that may be, it has but that one meaning, which is as personal as though it were a portrait. Nothing else could be intended. But it is a peasant portrait, like an image upon a wooden panel. It is full face, and looks straight out before it, with flat shoulders, and arms straight down at its sides. Only in the first few bars. Then we hear in it the red fire of a primitive sunset, upon black earth. We see cabins or shelters of fresh boughs, where the crowd eat or drink at the huge horse fair in the plain, while the music turns into the discordant music that they listen to. Black lambskin caps and shaggy sheepskin coats are worn. We are looking for a race of strangers in the crowd. We shall know them by their springing, lumbered step. Here is one! He has the insolent and peacock tread. Wearing a travesty of a beggar's rags, with bared chest and brass-studded belt, long hair to his shoulders, and mesmeric gaze. He has companions in the crowd, but they

## *Moskovski Traktir*

keep away from him on purpose For their trade is cheating The music has turned into a Ciganje tune And it ends with a run or glissando upon the dulcimer, played, without the hammer, by the fingers of one hand.

But he plays the same tune again, and it is entirely different Now, wholly in Ciganje rhythm With wild runs and ornaments hidden, before, in the body or fabric of that sheepclad tune Without the addition of a note, but changing the time and altering the meaning Fire, or sparks, are in its footsteps Impossible to let it bear images, for there is such entrancement in its time and measure that the tune hypnotizes in itself, and has no suggestion but its own peculiar tread The runs or shakes are like flourishes That plain tune is in another language, a secret tongue of chicanery or subterfuge With one finger of the right hand he runs from end to end of the keyboard, as though, for this sacred trance, he would tear the cymbalom to pieces Loud and shrill, like the run of the Pan pipes which are equivalent to bird whistlings or interjections played by the Danubian shepherds where the river becomes a swamp of huge willow trees, down by the delta, and storks and cranes and pelicans are seen It must be in imitation of the Pandean pipes, which he may have heard once or twice and no more.<sup>1</sup> But, now, the glissandos sound soft and smooth for the expiring of the tune, and it dies into the great plain as the mists come up

But we are to hear music of another order Tunes, or their prototypes, that will be sung, in another generation, in the night cafés and restaurants of Moscow Under the gas-lit chandeliers of the Novo-Troitski Traktir or the Moskovski Traktir, where the Gypsy women singers of Moscow danced and sang Not in hovels, but in all the luxury of gilded mirrors and plush sofas, among the barbaric wonders of Russian cooking, sparkling Crimean wines, and champagnes from the Don Tunes to which we would listen, all night through, and never tire Not so monotonous as the Hungarian Gypsy music, which is too formal in its beginnings Many accounts have been left of these famous Gypsy women singers They sang both in Russian, and in their own language, and there were among them artists who have never been equalled No one could pass any length of time in Moscow without being seduced by these melodies, and carrying away the memory of them The audience, consisting chiefly of rich merchants, was quite different from that of the capital, St Petersburg They called for the same tunes, over and over again, which they remembered all their lives Melodies that evoke no imagery, and, in fact, mean nothing else but the drug which is in their sentiment and rhythm But this is, indeed, a craving which must be satisfied

The long opening notes of the tune are repeated, two or three times over, like the casting of a net, which is thrown again and again so that nothing can escape it Also, the musicians must mesmerize themselves They have to feel it working in them It quickens The violins begin their wild leapings, and the abrupt changes of key which are the means

<sup>1</sup> Compare Fanica Luca, the Romanian player upon the Pan pipes

## *Descent of the god*

by which they work upon the nerves and gain their hold upon them. By now, we can understand that old legend of the Orient according to which the rules of music were formed in order to tame the wild animals, and to bring harmony into the world. For it snares the senses. It is the formula of the drug that it must be repeated again and again monotonously. The *primás* or first violin ornaments the melody, and then plays it, in variation, against the cymbalom, while the spell works in himself, in the other musicians, and in the audience. Then it seizes him, and he leads the orchestra, playing at furious speed in counterpoint against them.

So it is among the Magyars, but, here in Moscow, the fabric of their orchestra is the *balalaika*, led by the cymbalom. We have the slow melody again, again, then the chorus comes, and the Gypsy choir begins to sing. After which a famous singer, one or other, takes up the song. The night music spreads contagion. Were you to walk into the crowded hall of the *Moskovski Traktir*, shaking the snow off your coat, or go up into one of the private rooms above, you would find half-drunken men and women laughing, and others sitting, weeping. Upon summer evenings it is the same, in the cabarets outside the city.

Here and now, we hear these tunes upon the dulcimer, and can predict the future for them. But they are played in primitive or embryonic form, not vulgarized. It is impossible they should die. By some magical alchemy, they are crowd emanations or impersonations. By the rule of numbers they must always have existed, as melodies, and can never have been written down. In the sense that they were complete already, and only needed to be gathered like the mushrooms in the field. We have said that they are exhalations or interpretations of a mood, but, in fact, they can create the mood. That must be why some tune comes into the head for no reason when we are thinking of nothing in particular. But, as regards the composition of these melodies, they do not always visit the brains of those who are prolific of such things. Did we know the true history we would find that they come, impartially, to rustic musicians who have been visited before, and to those whom the god inhabits, this once, and never again. It is quite arbitrary. There are empty shells that murmur continually, and that bear his echo in them, and those may be persons who cannot read or write, and are, in all else, of a low intelligence. Others may have a knowledge and an instinct surpassing that of most musicians. For fire and inspiration, when they play, there is nothing to be compared to them. This must be because it is still a wonder and a sacred mystery, beyond logic and beyond explanation.

The process is sensual and physical, and nothing else. We have to submit to it as the hooded serpent to his charmer. We have seen that one of the secrets is repetition or reiteration, and that it must begin slowly and gently, as though to rock or lull the senses. The ornament or arabesque is a part of it. Probably the purpose of that is to distract what is more critical or resistant, in order to cast the spell behind it. This is equivalent to the voice of the anaesthetist, or to what the hypnotist may say while he bids us stare upon some glittering object in order to fix the focus of the eyes.

## *'Airs Russes'*

There must be submission of the will and senses. The slow prelude, or *lassú* as the Magyars call it, can be drawn out, delayed indefinitely, until the trance begins to show. It may, even, be that the secret lies in mastering the hours so that they merge into one another, and none of the audience have the will to get up and leave. They are willing to spend the whole night in listening. In effect, this music could be a drug put into their glasses that destroys their resolution. A narcotic that works collectively, as in the hegemonies of insects, where all obey instinctively, and no individuals are outside the spell.

We are listening to 'The Scythe' and 'The Goosekeeper', two romances which, in later years, were favourites in the night restaurants of Moscow. And we hear their real character upon this rustic instrument, where, by rusticity, we intend wooden houses and a far horizon. The tunes are potions or medicines that must be mixed with wine. But, in their simple state, we assist at the gathering of the herbs. In a dewy morning, while the rye is green. How can that be, while this simple tune turns in upon itself? But it is as if the mere notes had a taste in them. In that, they are minor enchantments, like a vision in the crystal or upon the wall. It hangs upon the notes, so that the picture does not exist without the music. So soon as he plays, it stands out clear before the eyes, and this could happen ten or twenty times, always the same. Precise in detail, fixed, and yet it fades with inattention, for before the end of the tune we can listen to nothing but the melody. And, as it dies, the picture comes up for a moment, but dies, also, like a taste upon the tongue.

How is it that the Russian accent can inhabit but a bar or two, and be unmistakable in that? In the opening phrase, merely, of a song. That is enough. So that if it broke off, there, and went no further, there would be no mistaking it. Is it because music is a sort of shadow or parallel to speech? But let the song continue to its end! When the chorus comes, after the verse, the mystery appears again, immediately, in the shape and content of the strophe. It is not enough to say that the music follows certain racial and acknowledged lines. It is in the timbre and meaning of those rules, themselves, which accepts the explanation but carries it no further. The definition, that is to say, is a matter of fact, it states the formula, but does not tell us why, and how, it works. We know the ingredients, it may be, but are not told the secret of their quantities. That is withheld, as are the savours of the earth and of the rain. It is those which give the flavour, and no mathematical formula can imitate them. Can it be because the sensibilities have been bred and nourished in these lands? Would another human race, inhabiting the same country, work in that same idiom? Certain curious traits of resemblance there would be, ghostly parallels or identities, but no more than that. Music, then, must be the ghost of speech, when it comes spontaneously, to simple souls, in inspiration when it is born in minds that cannot read or write. But, also, it can be in the form of a riddle, that is meaningless, yet full of meaning. There can be themes that are like an epigram, a play of words, a catch, an apothegm. Freaks, like a double fruit, or the rose that has two hearts.



## *The Gypsy accent*

We shall find instances of this magic But, later, among the immortals Not, here, in this blossoming of the plains

The player is a Jew bred to poverty and a life of misery We must shudder when we think of the room in which he spent his childhood Of the slum street excepting, always, that it was a slum of the Middle Ages, and an Eastern slum, at that, but with full rigour of the cold added to it, so that for winter raiment, the rat, the cat, the fox were skinned But, in all things, the nationality of Gusikov must be considered, for it makes him different from the Gypsy players of the cymbalom The genius of the race which excels in tragedy, and which interprets but does not create, found in him its opportunity Fétis, describing Gusikov, speaks of the habitual melancholy expressed in his features, and mentions his pallor, which added to the interest aroused by his prodigious talent To this, we could add, for our part, his distinctive Jewish dress, in which he appeared condemned to the slums, the serf of the filthy streets And, also, to be in some sort a student of alchemy, in the long gown of the priest or wizard <sup>1</sup>

A musician of his race, even if he could not read the notes or write down music, even though he were an instinctive and not a learned player, would be possessed of more intellect than a Hungarian Tzigane But it is with those that he is comparable in temperament Of the famous Bihary we are told, by Liszt, that 'When an orchestra alternating with his played at a ball he used, almost as soon as they had finished, to take up the same themes but with a new vigour they no sooner came to his hand than they became Bohemian' The performances of Gusikov, when we remember that he was a dying man, called for an altogether incredible expenditure of nervous and physical energy But we should compare, for this, the accounts of how Chopin, another consumptive, had to be carried upstairs and into the room in order that he should be seated at his instrument, during the concerts that he gave in London, and elsewhere in this country, in 1848, a few months before his death Even so, he had not to limit himself to the more simple items of his repertoire, but was able to give a full exhibition of his powers Chopin's songs, which were Polish and Lithuanian airs that he adapted, were of the type of melody played by Gusikov, who, once again we say, performed nothing but Russian, Jewish, and Polish popular tunes and dances But these took on, immediately, a character of his own, and became the vehicles of his mind and personality

O, what a miracle! This is the damp must, distilled, from a clearing in the forest No! no! it is pure music You must not move or stir It is leagues from anywhere, too little to be found upon a map But its beauty is in its perfect form This you would never be given by a Tzigane player Those have the fire but not milk, not crystal, not perfection Not milk of the udder, but the milk of plants and flowers Weep! weep! Not because it

<sup>1</sup> A portrait of Gusikov appears as frontispiece to a little book by the Viennese music publisher, Schlesinger It was printed in 1839, but I have failed to find a copy of this

## *Song of the mushrooms*

has a meaning, but because it comforts and assuages. It is as though the fingers of it touched or stroked our hearts. You will be awake when you remember this, and yet its message is of sleep. It tells you that you can sleep and dream of what you will. That is the way to die when your hand is upon the flower. For the music forgives and understands. How can that be? Ah! do not ask. It is in the phrase, and is as clear as speech. It comes again, with no other meaning. There can be no mistaking it. That is its message. In a language that has no need of words.

And another, and another. These are not folk songs, but they are taken from little plays and dramas composed in popular style, and performed at fairs up and down the country. And they come back to us as popular songs and dances played in the *Tzigane* style, like the tunes heard by Sarasate and transcribed by him for his violin. We can never tell, precisely, whether those are Russian or Hungarian, the truth being that they are theatre music, of no defined frontier, but with the restaurants and cafés of Moscow as their capital. Here and now, we hear them before they reached the glitter of the gaslights. This is the music that transposes men and animals and makes them weep. For no reason. It is a spell or an enchantment. You may lose the focus, for a moment, in listening to the notes, separately, and not surrendering to the tune, a sensation like that of moving swiftly past a fence or row of palings and counting them one after another, in isolation, until the eyes get weary and the stakes or hop-poles flow by, once more, in their patterns. In fact, you may break the magic, but can get back to it. Or, even, it allows you to drop out, on purpose, and pulls you in again. For the magic lies in the playing, not in the tunes themselves.

This is a song of the mushrooms in the woods. With no words, and, were there words, we should not understand them. It tells of how the mushrooms held a diet, a parliament, and went to war with the mushroom known as the *borowik*, the pine-lover, for their leader. With but a pair of wooden mallets, tipped with felt, the damp, lonely wood becomes alive. Ah! but it is not the picking of mushrooms. What we have in the music is October and the hunter's moon. It is a ballad in rustic accents. And the melody, after it, is so haunting and beautiful that we must dwell on every phrase so as to remember it.

Next, a little drinking song which sparkles, when shaken, as though from the flakes of gold leaf in the *Danzig* brandy. And a song of the linden flowers, a summer song, for the Poles take their name for the month of July, *lipiec*, from the linden trees, and drink a *miot* or honey mead in that month which is flavoured with the linden flowers, so that it is in our own tongue a flowering mead and we would celebrate this *hydromel* that swims with flowers. If there be wine, it is the Hungarian *tokay*, but mead is the national drink. Those are meadows of the red *agaric* and the *chanterelle*, or fox mushroom, from Northern parts of Poland or Lithuania, at the edge of the great forest, where the fields are damp and shaded from the trees. Here is nothing Russian. It is a different paganism, of another ancestry. We have village *mazurkas* and *kolomyjkas* coming

## *Orpheus and his lyre*

from Ruthenia, down near Galicia, which is close to the Dniester In order to bring back those tunes it is but necessary to cross the river

There can be a mere phrase, of which it is not possible to bear the poignancy, that brings tears The master of such emotions is Schubert. It has been written of the great Anton Rubinstein that he could play some simple piece by Mozart or Schubert and reduce his audience to tears But the divine genius of those composers almost suffers from the fact of their having been human beings, having lodged, and fed, and done hack work for the publishers, it would be an advantage, positively, if those melodies were anonymous for then we have the assurance, almost, that they existed in nature The ancient instrument, and its particular and unique development into a perfection that will never be heard again, this, too, helps the music For the more beautiful of these melodies have a natural or rustic spontaneity that could never be imitated by the masters On occasion, too, a depth of meaning, as though dug into the soil and into the whole human past, or, again, sacred and wonderful because meaningless, or beyond meaning, in that manner of a riddle or conundrum, of an epigram or rebus, even, the theme being equivalent to a nugget or a meteorite of mathematical and magical properties giving forth sparks and radiations, capable, musically, of being read backwards or in contrary motion, split into variation, and then continued, telescoped, as it were, in double counterpoint, or submitted generally to all the devices of the contrapuntist This, in the hands of the greatest musical genius there has ever been, is a subject to which we shall return on a later page hoping that the remarks and reactions, even of an amateur, may bear a little contribution to the sacred mystery For this instant it is the lesser magic, but that is no less wonderful in its spontaneous flowering Nearer, too, to the human emotions because it has no encumbrance Laughter and tears lie as near together as flesh to the bone They are contingent, or spring up in one another's footsteps as though their seed was carried on the winds

Why should such gifts come, unsought, to ignorant minds, or be borne, as at this moment, from the hands of a dying man? Ah! this is something that we shall never hear again The subtle genius of his race is inhabiting these others The outcast, who has no home, possesses them and speaks their secrets It is the hour of exception when all things are tranced Persons, who are under the spell, will empty out the money from their pockets on to the table in order that he should continue playing Meanwhile, they sit weeping as they listen They are persons who keep quite alone, and do not move or stir Such is the effect of music It is an intoxication, certainly, or an hallucination They are possessed by music, and are, mentally and physically, under its dominion They are in his power completely If he belonged to the race of vagabonds it would be all fire the slow flame, and the raging, all consuming fire For that is the Gypsy style In their own language, and none other All that they play becomes Bohemian, and uncontrollable But this musician is priest or wizard, and not dervish He is not the naked fakir who walks into the

## *The Gypsy and the Jew*

fire who, in frenzy, tears and eats the living goat, stabs himself, gashes his own flesh, and lets the serpent bite him

This Jew with the dulcimer has more subtle magic It may be that because he has lived in houses he is more understanding Those others, who are nomads by blood, cannot know the pathos of those little things that are personal belongings Their fire is inarticulate: it is of the blood, but not of the heart or brain Therefore, it is animal and not spiritual It is communicable, by mass, as are sensations of fury or of panic It requires incessant heating of the blood, for it appeals to passions that must never cool Therefore, their ornament and the headlong, vertiginous speed, with, immediately, the preluding of another melody upon the violin or the cymbalom, already foreshadowing another climax in its long drawn phrases

The children of the tawny race are precocious, and at an early age they are in love From birth they are young animals It can be seen in their springing walk, and in the manner in which they raid the villages as if to rob them Music, to them, is a sensual pleasure like the purring of the cat that stretches up, in ecstasy, and treads with velvet paw, and jumps into your lap It is instinctive, like the displaying of the golden pheasant when he arches his back, or tautens it to one side, and running up and down with leaping step, with flashing eye and golden hair, stiffens and distends his cape or mantle, hissing, meantime, as it might be a serpent, in order to mesmerize the hen His display is a dance of courtship, nothing else But the hen pays little heed to his magnificence The cock bird displays, or shows off, for his own pleasure

This is the attitude of the Gypsy, in music, towards other races and the secret, also, of his own sensations He makes use of it as a means to hypnotize It is his frenzy or delirium, but to himself, as well, an ecstasy of enjoyment He does not, even, have to learn as other men When a violin is first put into his hand he imitates by watching the fingers of the other players, and has to get the tunes by heart To the Gypsy, and to the Jew, as well, music was a means of sorcery A method of obtaining mastery, and to be enjoyed as such The child prodigy, who is a Jew, is no uncommon phenomenon, but occurring, nearly always, in Eastern Europe At twelve years of age they have learned everything there is to learn They may never play as well again, probably because they lose their souls by constant repetition of what is already flawless and cannot be improved upon We have to consider what music can mean to a child prodigy And our argument points, perhaps, to the limitations of the violin If it were another instrument he might never tire of it The clavichord, the harpsichord, perhaps the lute, are instruments capable of lifelong improvement and exploration Those are personal instruments of fresh discovery and endless beauty, as, in this instance, was the strauiedel or cymbalom of Gusikov His ancestors, before they begged their way from slum to slum, could have been minstrels in the Tartar camp

Most of our music is Italian Its line of beauty is from the Mediterranean Even if it comes from the green fields, or from the stone walls

## *Berecynthian rattle*

and border towers, even if it be a *madrigal*, a fantasy for a chest of viols, a pavane, a *galharde*, or divisions on a ground. Its greatness, when it flies with wings, is in an air which is Italian, though permuted behind the mullions on winter nights of wind and snow. *Toccata*, *pastorale*, or *pas-sacaglia*, all are Italian, in origin, and by name. But this is music from another world. Blown by the long winds out of the *kibitkas* or the tents of felt, moved with the nomads to where the grass was sweet and the wilderness was pied with flowers. There, you could have heard this instrument, or its counterfeit. The germ of this music was no Italian serenade, but an epic upon the harp and sheepskin drum, played at the moment when the conqueror lifted up his victim's skull, and drank from it. Such was the frenzy, or the seizure in this music. Its time for love was when the *khanum* stood in her golden gown, stiff with gold, and with her train held up by her maidens. Behind her mask of white lead or antimony, which was white with the cosmetic, and like a mask of paper. In the distance there were four towers of skulls, built up as high as you could throw a stone, a row of skulls, and then a row of clay. The countrymen told how, at night, a bright light seemed to be burning on the tops of all the towers of skulls. Behind that, the sky was pale and greenish and entirely empty.

The cymbalom, in spite of the extraordinary resources of his particular instrument, is inadequate for so consummate a performer. It is the same sensation that is given by the greatest pianists. The single keyboard is not enough. In much of his music we hear the Berecynthian rattle. This was the giant cymbalom or dulcimer carried by the Scythian Horde in the vanguard of their battles. It was the ancestor, too, of the music of the Turkish Janissaries. Their bells and drums and cymbals were in imitation of its sound. Called Berecynthian after the clashing cymbals, drums, tabrets, bucklers, of the *Corybantes*, who were priestesses of *Cybele*. In fact, the giant cymbalom was the consensus of that noise. But, in the Scythian horde, it preluded among the horsemen.

The musician stood, erect, in a waggon that was a ten-wheeled chariot, and played while it moved along the steppe. He played them into battle, and at the feasting afterwards, when they ate horses roasted whole, entire, served up with their heads, and drank fermented mares' milk. At such nomad feasts the musician was sometimes an 'Indian', which is to say he may have been a Gypsy, and at other times he was a wandering Jew. He went everywhere with the Tartar warriors and formed part of their military establishment. When great towns were captured, musicians rode at head of the procession for the triumphal entry. They played the Tartar Horde into the burning ruins. Historical survivals of this practice were the Gypsy violinists who accompanied the Wallachian *voivodes* on their wars. It comes down from Attila and his Huns, and is true of all the great nomad conquerors down to Tamerlane. The Mongol, Batu Khan, who brought Gypsy coppersmiths from Central Asia with his army when he invaded the Danubian provinces, in the twelfth century, which was the earliest irruption of the Gypsies into Europe, had 'Indian', that is

## *The Giant dulcimer*

to say Gypsy, or Jewish minstrels with him. No certain description of this instrument has come down to us. It is but a legend and a name for intoxication and delirium.

But we hear wild cries and the beating of the cymbals. Then, sharp blows, as it were the striking of an anvil. In imagination, these give sparks of flame. It is the nomad coppersmiths, or armourers, who come forth from their dark tents and take up the din. They have the long hair of the fire eater or snake charmer, and wear rags that are singed and blackened by the flame. At that early date they are still Indian. The shadow of the great Indian sun is upon their skins. For their burnt bodies are the colour of their copper cauldrons. Now we hear a loud twanging, as of strings or wires that are tried, and then tightened. The same note is struck again, again, but with the fingers, which are more sensitive than the plectrum. Those chords suggest a race of archers. They must have bow rings made of bone or ivory. From every direction there comes the neighing of mares and stallions, and the bleating of the herds of long horned sheep. But, above that, comes the testing and the tuning of the strings. It must be a huge instrument, and there is more than one of them.

The ten-wheeled chariots have the mares attached to them, for part of the music is the stamping of the hooves. Now, loud and tremendous, it begins. The players, like charioteers, are in long white gowns. But there are no fillets on their foreheads to bind their hair. Their hair flows, loose and long, upon their shoulders. They are the furies, urging into war. They move their whole arms, as though they strike with blacksmiths' hammers. It is a giant dulcimer, the tremendous shakes and arpeggios sweep the air. There can have been no other such preluding. Two or more of the huge dulcimers sound forth together and strike out the theme, with that terrific rattle which commands and exults. Long as a death rattle, and leading into that. The waggons move forward. The horses paw the earth, and rear up on the rein. At the same moment all the tents are down. The Berecynthian sistrum is not one instrument alone, but the giant cymbaloms or dulcimers, and trumpets, drums, and copper cauldrons. But the players of the dulcimer are possessed by fury, as though they ran amok, or slew in frenzy. It is darker, darker, and to more of the long tremendous shaken rattlings the whole Horde moves on.

Now, with the fingers of one hand, he sweeps the notes. It is part of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* of Mendelssohn, as though played upon the virginals or clavichord. Preluding, in magic, with glissandos, up and down the scale, in the manner of the cymbalom or dulcimer. A magical underworld opens, as if to that wave of the fingers, as if they held the key. It is curious how, in this, he speaks with a foreign accent. A nocturne ah! but this is the greenwood of Arden upon Midsummer Night, while the nightingale is singing and there are little, mysterious noises that no one can explain. It is so exquisite that everyone is in tears. The little dance dies down. The glissandos come again. We hear the last notes played, which mean the ending. And the echoes of this magic die away.

It is impossible to move or stir

## *The huge grammarian*

Then, like someone who is dying, who puts out his hand, he takes up the hammers of the dulcimer, but as though the room was in darkness, or in a dying light, and preludes upon the notes. We are in that street of Mohilev, or near by, in the little town where he was born. For the music has the intonation of the spoken word and these are the last words of a dying man. There will be no more. Only a phrase or two, and it is ended.

The whole town is in darkness as we drive away.

## 2. Fugue

There has been demonstration of the universal truth by fugue, and it may be that more wisdom is to be found in that than in the religions, and religious books, of all the world together.

But the one genius, Johann Sebastian Bach, was master of the fugue. Even in his hands the form was not always obedient. It might take a direction that, mathematically, was imposed upon it, be deflected, by new material, from the argument, or become redundant. But his was the supreme intellect in music. He had most, but not all, of the other wisdoms. Therefore, at times, a purely musical virtuosity creeps in. Technical skill in surmounting difficulties becomes an end in itself, or, even, he celebrates his faith, by that, as though he had come to believe that the ordering of his giant ingenuity was expected of him by his god.

Nevertheless, he is the huge grammarian. No other genius stands beside him. He frames the laws. His language is of a majesty that none other can approach. He is, all things considered, probably the greatest artist there has ever been. There is only Shakespeare to compare with him. Shakespeare, indeed, is so extraordinary a phenomenon that we are hardly interested in his person, and accept the obscurity of his history as part of the miracle. He was a poor actor, who wrote immortal plays. But the personality of Johann Sebastian Bach is of another sort. It is physical, in the sense that he inhabits, physically, his music, and however little we may know of him, we feel his presence in it. This is a question, more than anything else, of his characteristic weight, by which we intend solemn and serious from his first tread, but moving, when it suits him, in every mood of the heart or soul.

We are concerned, here, only with his organ music. Not with the Chorale Preludes only with Toccata, or Fantasia and Fugue, Prelude and Fugue, and Passacaglia. In these we hear the full flood of his genius in its architectural forms, not interpreting the sacred text, as in his Cantatas, nor in the role of primitive, as in the orchestral Suites or Overtures and the Brandenburg Concertos, where the germ of symphonic shape is not yet developed, and these limitations leave him on a par with his contemporary Handel in the Grand Concertos. The giant hand of Bach and his divine intellect are to be heard in the Forty Eight Preludes and Fugues, as much in the first set as in the second, in the Goldberg Variations, in the Chaconne for violin solo, in the Chromatic Fantasia and

## *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*

Fugue, in the Cantatas, and in the Mass in B minor But more than anywhere else, it may be, in his organ music That is because, upon that instrument the performance depended upon himself alone Until the coming, in fact, of the great pianists, and the emergence of conductors who were virtuosi, the organ was the vehicle for the greatest triumphs of instrumental music, and this was true until the time of Mendelssohn The clavichord and harpsichord upon which Handel and Domenico Scarlatti were rivals to Bach were not suited by their nature to be heard by an audience of more than a roomful of persons But in Northern Germany where attendance in church was nearly compulsory, there could be a public of many hundreds, or more That this music owing to its intellectual content can have meaning to but few persons makes an empty, or nearly empty, Gothic church with Renaissance monuments, the setting in which we would listen to Bach's organ music So it begins, but soon, very soon, it lifts us from the cold stone vessel into eternal time and space

The Fantasia and Fugue in G minor can be our first experience of these wonders Its rhapsodical opening puts it among the bravura pieces Indeed, it starts after the manner of an improvisation, like a flourish to impose silence and impel attention The Fantasia is of some three or four minutes in length and the huge personality, the giant hand, are apparent in it Like so much of Bach, its eternity is achieved by retrogression This is, in fact, not music of the eighteenth century at all It belongs to an older and more serious epoch, though its content is musical, and only musical Religious thought does not enter into it, still less into the Fugue that follows The scope is only for musical display, but of the ancient or Northern school of Hamburg, where music was still influenced by the Netherlands composers of the sixteenth century According to tradition, Bach composed the G minor Fantasia and Fugue for a particular occasion, his visit to Hamburg in 1720, when he played to the organist Reinken, who was ninety-seven years old at the time The old man is supposed to have remarked that he did not know such players still existed It was, therefore, not a revelation of something new in music, but the survival of the old which Reinken considered must have died away

The story may be apocryphal, but, none the less, it tells the truth, for inspiration came to Bach, often enough, from dried up and disused sources To the detriment of his eyesight he was, all through his days, an inveterate copyist of the works of lesser men, of small musical stature, necessarily, when compared with himself, but it was as though he had a particular affection for the old grammarians They were his quarry in which he found unworked or forgotten seams We know, too, from personal testimony that, in his own home, he would always go to his instrument and play some piece of music by another composer, as though that released in him the springs of inspiration, before he played any music of his own This is an indication of his character and method and it proves that, like other great artists, he would turn to advantage anything and everything that came to hand He needed, also, to be put into the mood



## *Kermesse*

or trance, the fixed focus, or the 'step' on which the speed boat moves across the waves. That must be the nearest physical analogy to the act of inspiration and it requires, in every instance, an auxiliary, a vehicle for the intoxication, for the spontaneous flowing of the numbers. It was provided, in this supreme example of the mystery, by the playing of some small piece of music from another hand.

But the *Fantasia* continues upon its way. There are passages of meekness or humility, developed out of the texture, which could be interpreted as deprecation of what is to follow, or are they no more than incidental, part of the musical pattern, as it were? For this is not, yet, the mighty and supreme genius of music. That is to come. And soon. The *Fantasia* ends with a thunderous and martial decision, a formal termination which tells plainly that it is done and ended. This is so different, too, in phrase or architecture, from the Handelian termination which is a magnificent conclusion. That, also, expresses itself in full blooded architecture, shall we say of the Venetian order, of Venetian door and window and mounting stair, more splendid, indeed, than any buildings in that floating city, but this decision in the *Fantasia* implies that more is coming. That we have reached the *Fugue* that what has gone before has been but *Prelude*.

The fugal subject plays itself, for the first time, like a story or a narrative that has to be listened to in full. It must, and can only be, a moral tale, some sentence full of meaning, the titles of God, it may be, as they might be called down from a high tower, not by human voice, but by a peal of bells upon a clear morning. The material, or the tune, has been said to be an improved version of a passage from a sonata by the nonagenarian Reinken, and again, it is claimed as a Dutch folk tune, being probably the one and the other combined and altered into its present form. But the effect, as we listen to it, could well be that of a Dutch popular song of the seventeenth century, or earlier, played upon the carillon. It has the substance of a carillon, as though arranged for that in the foundry when the bells were cast, while suitable tunes to exploit their possibilities were discussed.

At first hearing it is like a rustic merrymaking, a kermesse among the canals and watermeadows, not in the opening phrase of the *Fugue*, which, we have said sounds like the names of God, but in the second half, only, of its first line or sentence, after which, with the miraculous changes of which music disposes, the answer or remainder of the whole theme comes back, bound in and staved for treatment so that it is obvious the fugal voices will begin. It turns, then, at once and immediately, abstract and not pictorial, as it divides. The second time the theme is played it has changed again, miraculously, in meaning, and is organ music, pure and simple, sounding high up among the rafters of the ceiling, played clearly and conspicuously by the person in the organ loft. In silvery and piping tones, and we shall find that it differs in suggestion and meaning each time we hear it, now, less energetic and less dulcet than before, but adapted to endless variation in the hands of genius.

## John Bull

The derivatives of the theme seem to grow, organically, out of the stem as though this was natural to them and not the fruits of his abnormal skill. It is because the theme has been tried and tested in every possible way until it has been shaped into the long melody of the *andamento*, from the Italian *andare*, to move forward or go on, for that is the type to which this Fugue belongs. There can be *andamenti* which have been built, purposely, so that they divide into a pair of sections in order to give the composer every opportunity for full development and the complete exhibition of his powers. Shorter themes, not complete as tunes, were termed *soggetti*, meaning subjects, while, in the grammar of the fugue, a theme which was so brief that it consisted merely of a musical figure was given the name of *attacco*, from the Italian *attacare*, to tie or bind together, or combine.

The G minor Fugue then, is an *andamento*. It is not of that type which is just a subject suited by its nature for fugal treatment, as in Bach's Art of Fugue, where an apparently dull or simple theme was chosen, deliberately, because it was capable of so much development. Nor does it belong to that order of themes, dating from the last period of his organ compositions, written at Leipzig, when he was in the full maturity of his intellect, the feature of which is that their content is that of an aphorism or an epigram. This is, definitely, a tune, so much so, that no one who hears it can forget it.

From its sparkle and liveliness a popular origin is quite probable, while, though Northern and not Italian in phrasing, it is not specifically Teutonic in feeling, but could easily be Dutch, a burgher or folk contemporary of Sweelinck, a Dutch tune that had been heard in Hamburg, which is nothing unlikely. Perhaps the ancestry of this tune or its connections are to be traced by analogy with the career of the great English composer of the previous century, John Bull, who, when he left the service of James I in 1617, and took up the post of organist at Antwerp Cathedral, not only formed a friendship with the Dutch composer Sweelinck and wrote a fantasy upon one of Sweelinck's Fugues, but wrote, also, a 'Dutch Daunce' and folk song variations upon the Flemish or Dutch airs 'Ein Kindeken ist uns geboren' and 'Den Lustijken mey' (The Merry May). We would imply that the Dutch folk tunes upon which John Bull wrote his variations were of the same character and origins as that which served as theme for Bach's Fugue in G minor, and that, perhaps, the presence of such tunes in Holland was as much a tribute to the importance of Sweelinck as it could be argued, in a parallel sense, that Italian melody and the beauty of Italian singing in the streets was due to the great Italian schools of music and singers of the past. These were, in fact, relics of a golden age of music in the North, of which the organists, Reincken at Hamburg, and Buxtehude at Lubeck, were the living survivals.

When the tune or song comes back again it is played reflectively, and in a kind of purposeful solitude, which gives to it, once more, another and a different meaning. More silvery and piping, yet, while this particular register isolates the melody, and we hear it up near the ceiling, breaking from the flutes, the treble pipes of the organ, one after another, being brought into play as though the strict harmony was a game among them,

## *The master of the carillon*

while the air climbs in and out and wreathes itself upon the pipes The pace, even, is slow and rambling, for this setting forth of the tune is deliberate so that we can listen to its message If such there be? Or is it music, pure and simple? Certainly, unlike the other fugal music that we would examine, this has no theory of Creation It does not breathe terror The huge rolling figures of the organ Toccata and Fugue in F major are not present Nor the lightnings and thunder of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor This is more purely musical in meaning because of the long melody of which it is born, and which is treated objectively by Bach, in the sense that the voices of the Fugue are derived or developed from out of it, and not imposed with superhuman ingenuity upon it But now the voices of the Fugue begin to turn in upon themselves, and alter in intent by doing so There is an analogy in this to the animal that rolls upon its back and shows its belly The great hounds of the chase do this in play, so does the spaniel, and all other dogs It is with them a gesture of surrender, an offering of their vital parts, so that they may die quickly, but it has become a convention in their play, as much so as when they bite the hand but do not close their teeth In proof of which, the humble rabbit turns on his back to let the fox or greyhound kill him By some humanity, or animal feeling, that inhabits the cold numbers or the architecture of the Fugue, this is what happens Or it is some gesture of the composer's mind, as though he looked down in that moment from the organ loft, while the huge fabric of the Fugue slows down and steadies, and is done

The organ Fantasia and Fugue in G minor of Bach is of an immortality that never tires, although it is among the most familiar of all his works, It is so cheerful and good humoured that we would listen to it as humanity or human feeling It never makes the skin tingle or the hair stand on end, in that way which only Bach and Berlioz and Beethoven, in their different individualities, can achieve Each time we hear the Fantasia ending, and the beginning of the Fugue, we hear the shadow of the giant in that formal clension, as though he showed his huge hand, and his powers, for the moment It is a bravura ending, though less so than another that we shall remember, and after a moment's pause we hear the tune in its wonderful components, interlocking and returning in its phrases, chiming like a peal of bells, compact and fitting, made perfect in shape by the hand of the supreme master, so that its descending phrases are exact in cadence with the opening and it is set forth as a living entity with breath and animation of its own The perfect balance of its syllables is so mysterious What does it mean? What is its intention? This is no accident, like the pearl in the oyster shell, like the lump of amber borne to land in the floating seaweed, after a high wind, while the strand-rider patrols the lonely Baltic shore, nor any other of the happy freaks of nature This is deliberate not found by chance, but made by skill Invented in the one place, and then made anew, like the turning or polishing of that drop of amber And, in fact, it could be, in substance, a gathering or coagulation of good will or sweetness Its burden is of benevolence, set forth in an ingot that is imperishable and, like amber, warm to the

## *Prelude and Fugue in G major*

touch, that is no bigger than the one breath only, and then divides or sheds its sweetness, which is diffused among the various voices and gathered up into the whole body of the fabric, so that it informs the argument and points the message

But, immediately, and with only a pause of a moment in between, we hear the organ *Prelude and Fugue in G major* of Bach. This is of another character altogether, being one of his lesser masterpieces, and not to be numbered among the huge and triumphant demonstrations of his intellectual beliefs, though he believed with heart and soul as well, but it was his intellect that proved it to him. In the opening of this *Prelude and Fugue*, which are not so little in length, he does not tend the vine, he does not reap the golden field, there are no voices of God, nor rushing winds, instead, he is domestic and genial, and in the *Prelude* it could be that he is watering a windowbox, in his dressing gown, with a painted can. It is a demonstration, from trivial and little things, of the wonders of the world. We would number this with his domestic music, which exists in quantity. Not in scale, for, necessarily, this is bigger in scope than his *Sonatas* for a solo instrument, violin or violoncello, his flute and harpsichord *Sonatas*, lovely though they be, or the vast body of his keyboard compositions, but this organ *Prelude and Fugue* is domestic, surely, in its content. It breathes domestic or family contentment, and in the *Prelude* sets out to prove nothing, but is happy in its surroundings.

The opening is a set of brilliant and gay flourishes, not of triumph but of contentment, with a rocking or rolling upward rhythm, ending like the notes of a fanfare, almost, but this is only imitated or suggested, the pipes breathe neither defiance nor exultation, it is no more than the climbing of the fingers, one over another, upon the keyboard. After these flourishes the main theme appears, which is no more than a rising sequence, something which by its fluency can be suggested and hinted at, and even imitated indirectly, like its own echo or shadow, so that the pattern or message is repeated, but in outline only. There comes a moment when this theme proclaims itself four times over upon the manual, given out in ascension, after which it disappears and yields place to ghostly suggestions of itself in harmony and rhythm. But the capping of the theme, which is equivalent to an answer to the riddle or question which it poses, is a marching or a treading of the grapes, for the structure of the *Prelude* has changed in mood, and becomes positive. It enunciates the truth in this marching rhythm, which ends the first section, when the whole form is recapitulated for further argument, but ends with a most lovely phrase of exit or termination, through which the melody is led, to open again in fresh and tireless discussion of moral principles. It would be beyond our powers to enter into technical details of its structure, but a mind which has dwelt for long among the other arts, and lived in music as an amateur, may make a contribution that lies beyond and outside the absolute musical analysis, and yet brings other lights to bear upon this miracle of mortal origin.

Indeed, the particular miracle consists in the animation of an inanimate

## Cantatas

structure, if it is conceded that any piece of music, for instance this organ Prelude and Fugue, has one existence, on the paper upon which it is written, in however many copies, and another which only comes into being in performance, and is, therefore, intermittent. But this latter is its true life. Beneath the rules and complications of its formal structure a heart is beating and a mind is working, as though we could impute this same possession of the human faculties to the elaborate mechanism of a clock, to some mathematical calculation, or other co-ordination of minute and lifeless parts. The utmost endeavours of human craftsmanship are, nowhere, stricter or more exact than in the Fugue. But those others effect no more than their purpose. They have no ulterior meaning. They advance no argument and pursue it to the end. Their life is intrinsic and not independent. Bach is the only master who can animate the Fugue. The subject, upon this occasion, comes from the opening chorus of his Cantata 'My spirit was in heaviness', but the theme has been transposed from minor to major, and lengthened in the process. It has been suggested by Dr Sanford Terry that the Fugue was written ten years after the completion of the Cantata, which was an early work. In form it belongs to that type of theme which was called in Italian musical language a *soggetto*, shorter, therefore, and less of a tune than the subject of the Fugue to the Fantasia in G minor. In meaning it would appear to be an ecclesiastical reiteration. Some inevitable truth, which does not dull by repetition, but even, as the sacred formulas of the Buddhist church, confers immunity. At first hearing there is, certainly, a threat in it, an allusion, it may be, to death, which is unavoidable, and a state which was as important, in the mind of Bach, as the living world. But the theme coils in upon itself. It is not a melody but a sacred formula. It has a pushing rhythm, which pulls its conclusion after it, and begins again. Belonging, in spirit, to an earlier century, to a hundred years, at least, before the period of its composition. It has, in this beginning, a grimness which appears nowhere else in its own time. But soon relieved, and as though that threat was no longer necessary turning to a gaiety in the exhibition of its own powers, but little and unimportant in locality, as though this was a morning spent happily with Bach during years when he was unconcerned with the world and living outside it in some small contented place.

The liturgical voices have become secular. We are in the pastoral or idyllic world, and it would have many parallels, we do not doubt, did we but know his Cantatas, where it is certain more beauties lie concealed than in the whole body of music that is unfamiliar and but seldom given. There is, indeed, the same feeling in the Cantatas as in this organ Prelude and Fugue, that the music does not care whether it is performed, or not. This is not the case with an unfamiliar work by Berlioz. Upon such rare occasions as those are given, they call aloud to be repeated. But the Cantatas of Bach were composed in the routine of his duties, and would seem content, as it were, with the date of their original performance. This makes them immortal, but ephemeral. A series of masques, but without action, and played without scene or dresses, such are the Cantatas of Bach.

### *'Es ist vollbracht'*

In many of them the splendours and miseries of the world are not the theme. So it is with this Prelude and Fugue. It is concerned with quite other things. We hear that in the opening flourish of the Prelude, and it continues within the Fugue. For the burden of this music is affection. And by what miracle is that expressed in fugue? Not the lifting of pain, as in 'Es ist vollbracht' from the St John Passion, not the broad flowing Arcadian vale of 'The sheep may safely graze', both of which breathe thankfulness and peace, in their kind, nor is it the reflective picture, complete in itself, that Bach could evoke from the three words 'Et in Unum', in the Mass in B minor, which is among the most lovely of his inspirations. If we are to imagine these, for a moment only, as though their idiom expressed itself in painting, they are revealed as timeless in their greatness, but old fashioned in their time. The design is as copious as in a tapestry or picture of the Middle Ages. Let us name no names of painters, but affirm that, in these, he is a master of before the date of Rubens, untouched by the Renaissance and drawing most of his imagery from the Bible. In the particular works that we have mentioned there is nothing, as painting, that is later than the time of Luther, and it is, in fact, that contemporary vernacular in music that he has extended and made into his own. It is possible, therefore, to be timeless, and two hundred years behind your time. And, if as great as Bach, to be appreciated only in part after two more centuries have gone by. The curious isolation of this Prelude and Fugue in G minor in space and time, and what we have called its happy indifference to its fate, are confirmed in the odd modulations of the ending, which are even oriental in sound, in the sense that all early music, and most early works of art, have an Eastern accent. It can be no more than an accident, unless the imagery in which it deals comes from the Bible. It is suddenly wafted away from the landscape into contemplation, or into prayer. Without doubt, it is a religious ending, and it seems to express some mystery which it does not understand, but which must be accepted implicitly by a world which is not old enough to comprehend. What has gone before has been child-like in confidence and serenity. What follows is certain, but must not be argued. There is much, in fact, that cannot be explained. And the Fugue ends on that mystery.

The melody of Bach, when it is idyllic, must be based upon the visual surroundings, which will include the books and music that his eyes had seen. In another instance, it is impossible to believe that Handel, in spite of his notorious indifference and apathy towards the other arts, does not reflect the Roman and Venetian travels of his youth. Handel composed in the grand or classical manner, not because of his robust physical frame only, or because of his Gargantuan appetite, but for the reason that he was a cosmopolitan, imbued with the urbanity and humour of a world that we have lost. His music is the mirror of that civilization, just as the beauties of his musical structures, composed in England, are as though Brunelleschi, Bramante, Sansovino, had built upon English soil. 'Ombre mai fu' depicts ilex or cypress, the shade of Soracte or of Vallombrosa, not the wood of Dunsinane. His Water Music comes from a gilded barge moored

## *Twin brothers*

at Hampton, where the Thames flows past villas and soft lawns. What an era of visual perfection is to be perceived in the organ Concertos of Handel, where all around is new and splendid! And the rolling organ leads the eye to new statuary and painted ceiling.

But the melody of Bach goes deeper and concerns the whole of life, in an older world, apart, where the values are more permanent, and there are no coats of gilding. In order that this should not be transitory it has been fixed in time. That is to say, it is eternal because it deals with things that do not alter. But it speaks a ritual language, not in modern speech, but in an universal language which is, at once, old and new. With no grand buildings, or classical façades, but of timber-frame houses out of which you can step directly, and look up into the sky. Because he needed nothing more, but was contented. The musical faculty had been developed in him through all the generations of his family. They had been peasants and artisans, organists and town musicians throughout Thuringia. The names of more than sixty members of the Bach family who were connected with music have been preserved. He spoke, musically, in a vocabulary that was their own. There was no need for him to invent an idiom. It was born in him. Perhaps there may even be some obscure natural reason for his genius in that the father of Johann Sebastian, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was twin brother to Johann Christoph Bach, and that they were identical twins, both of them violinists, alike in thought and speech, and so similar in appearance that their own wives were unable to distinguish between them. It would seem, in Johann Sebastian, to be equivalent to a double transference of talent, resulting in an endless multiplication of the family abilities. A phenomenon which has appeared, perhaps, but this one time in history. By a freak of nature, or a rule which we do not understand, the uncle had a greater talent than the father. But, again, the sons of the uncle, in their turn became, the one, an obscure violinist, while the other abandoned music and went into the grocery business. The balance of genius righted itself and regained its level of normality. Of the twenty-four children of Johann Sebastian three or four were remarkable for their musical talents, but if positive genius had appeared again we should expect to find it, not among his offspring, but in the descendants of his brothers Johann Christoph, or Johann Jacob. With so many known individuals of the one family it could be possible to draw up a graph or chart showing the direction taken by their talents, and even, what would be, from conjecture, the path of probability. But this excessive blossoming was not to come again. Nevertheless, its reasons are apparent. It flowered, as we should expect, upon one of the least likely of the stems. The seedlings showed promise, but Philipp Emanuel, Wilhelm Friedemann, Johann Christian, never approached their parent in his genius, and the phenomenon expired among them.

We are now to hear this greatest of all artists at his fiercest and most tremendous fire of mind. What has gone before has been, by comparison, but the gentle warmth. This particular work is the organ Prelude and Fugue in C major, one of the five great organ compositions of his Leipzig

## *Prelude and Fugue in C major*

period, written, probably, about 1735, when Bach was nearly fifty years old. This is important to remember, while we listen, because the reader who is not professionally interested may not realize that the bulk of Bach's organ music, which, in any case, represents a much smaller part of his output than the layman might imagine, was written during his early life, chiefly at Weimar. This *Prelude and Fugue in C major* represents Bach, then, in mental and physical maturity. It is, in fact, an extraordinary work, as physically exciting as any music ever written, and to which belong many implications. The theme of the *Prelude*, and of another figure that occurs in it, are closely related to the opening chorus of his *Epiphany Cantata 'The Sages of Sheba'*, No. 65, written ten years previously, in 1724, and having, perhaps, some special association for his mind. Certainly the character of this *Prelude* suggests that the theme has not been chosen just because of its musical possibilities, because it was so hard a core or germ of melody, nor for the converse reason that being, superficially, meaningless or like a riddle it lent itself readily and pliantly to his designs. On the contrary, from the opening bar of the *Prelude* its soaring and ascending energy is apparent. It has been described by one writer as pastoral in character, while another critic interprets the *Prelude* as the vociferous welcome of the population to a reigning prince. Probably it is nearer to the truth to point out again that it is an *Epiphany Cantata* from which the theme, in reminiscence, has been adapted and that, therefore, it is more likely to have a Pentecostal meaning. Bach felt so powerfully the power of words, and gave to them so literal and pictorial a setting that the clue to the meaning of this *Prelude* is probably to be found in the exact words of that first chorus of the *Cantata*, and again in the precise mood of that other incidental figure which immediately precedes, so it is said, the entrance of the voices and concludes the movement when they have done.

The prevailing tone of the *Prelude* is harsh and strident, to the point, nearly, of being frightening. In effect it is a whirling and spiral climbing, which it is impossible not to associate with the Pentecostal winds and fires. This is expressed, so to speak, upon the trumpets. None of the dulcet shades of the organ are required. Nor is it a rolling figure, for the sake of rolling, as in the organ *Toccata and Fugue in F major*, where it is the play of a mighty strength, an infant strength, even, as though it were possible to conceive of a youthful creator who is making order out of chaos, and whose intentions and movements are depicted in this rolling figure, and in its constant elisions, which are as though things had been put to rights, and then he sets out again with more tasks to do. But in this *Prelude* the flames do not catch instantly or consume entirely. They return again and again. The succeeding subject, that comes after the soaring and ascending fire, seems like an expression of pious wonder at the miracle, not in surprise, for it is implicit that it is expected. Definitely, this calm and thankful return which prepares for the fire and the fearful winds to come back again, can mean nothing else, if music has a meaning. And, in fact, the ground is set and ready. It returns. The succeeding stages of the



## Pentecostal fire

miracle, or just its repetition, are depicted in the music. The second re-appearance is more terrifying still, accepted, once more, with pious and deprecating confidence, which is nothing else than a message that all is believed in and credible, but the tones of the organ, thereby, suggest in some way the empty vessel of a church with all the ornaments of devotion. And then, when all is ready, the winds and fires begin, for the last time. But, for this occasion, they catch, and their whirling, soaring fury makes the hair stand on end. There can be nothing else like this in music, for its terror. It gets right away, with the ground cleared for it, in a manner of physical excitement or inspiration that can only be compared with the enormous acceleration of some engine, or the drop from the minor into the the major key, as when, in that simile we used before, the speed boat rises on its 'step' and roars away, or the aeroplane alters its note of menace to die down into the distance behind a cloud. This concluding part of the Prelude becomes more and more like the cranking of some gigantic engine. It is to be more formidable still. But there is one more return of the subject in a changed tone, as though in worship of the power that sent it, almost as though the flames were bowing low, or kneeling at the altar stone. And they are lifted, suddenly, dying or diminishing. The gigantic engine beats its flails and ploughshares into trumpets. The flames are quenched. The giant power intervenes and orders. There comes the tremendous ending, in three phrases, like words of two syllables upon the trumpets, so peremptory that it is not credible this should be the triumphant proving of the problem. They are, in fact, three blasts of the trumpets, at sound of which the whole world falls down, in the name of the Holy Ghost who worked this miracle of the tongues of fire. It is the voice of God, and no more is said.

The Fugue which follows is built upon a theme so short that it is a phrase or little more, and only occupies one bar. By nature, therefore, it belongs in fugal language to the type of Italian *attacco*, a subject which in the literal meaning has needs to be combined or bound together. Thus is a Fugue in five voices, and the mysterious subject is repeated so constantly in different forms that, in effect, it is never absent from the structure. An unfortunate resemblance between this figure and the Prelude to the *Meistersinger* is no fault of Bach, and probably an accident on the part of Richard Wagner. But the coincidence is soon forgotten. At first hearing this phrase or theme of the Fugue, as is so often the case with Bach, comes out of the remote past. It is archaic, and if, superficially, it has some resemblance to the Prelude to the *Meistersinger* it could, as well, be said to be nearer in spirit to the opening notes of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. But the voices of the Fugue, one after another, break in upon its ritual phrases, and in a curious way they are so suited to a fugue that each entrance sounds like the introduction of new material. That is to say, the figure, in itself, is little more than an entrance. It exactly suggests that, and no more; and for a while the Fugue employs itself with the accumulation of its parts, until all have entered. To this point the Fugue has but little other meaning beyond the ancient liturgy of the phrase itself. But there

## *Canonic variations*

comes an augmentation of the subject, upon the pedals, by which it is altered in character, at which time the whole complex machinery of the Fugue is set in motion, and that figure has become menacing, and as it were, proved in action, and not awaiting contradiction. In reedy tones and with a gathering speed it enunciates the sacred apothegm, and states it again, more positive still. The entire Fugue moves with assurance to a foregone conclusion. It is as though this were some Euclidean problem to be solved, which will be proved by logic, without argument. But now the parts are quickened, and the turning, whirling of the Prelude comes back, with less intensity, it is true, more resembling a cloud of incense as that seethes and swirls up from the censer, and conceals it may be, some miracle or transformation that is taking place, that occurs regularly, and is part of the ritual. Or the ritual itself, the Communion, the miracle of transubstantiation, it could be. Whatever that thing may be, it has happened, and is over. The ending of the Fugue is concerned only with the conventional dying of its voices, while the music lifts up its eyes, as it were, towards the heavens. And when the voices have stated once more what they have to say, the Fugue slows down, and dies in full diapason against the mortal walls and ceiling.

In this organ Prelude and Fugue in C major, in particular, Johann Sebastian Bach is the greatest of the Ancients. Of none other of the great artists is this so true. It is because his concern is with the ancient truths. He does not belong to his own century at all, but, being rooted in eternity, has a meaning for all times, and speaks, therefore, in an ancient voice out of the universal and omnipresent past. Probably, in order to be numbered among the Ancients it is necessary to be peculiar or uncomprehended in your time. Johann Sebastian Bach is not the last of that race. Beethoven, obscured, but happy in his deafness, and William Blake are two others. They are approached by Cézanne, and there have been no more. These are not of the race of Watteau, Chopin, Keats, of whom, down perpetuity or in purgatory, the youthful ghosts wander among the myrtle groves.

But Bach is most Ancient of them all, before, in his old age, he withdrew into the mazes of the Fugue, and concealed himself where few could follow. That technical obsession betrays the Teuton in him, of which, despite their separable beauties, the *Musikalische Opfer* and *Die Kunst der Fuge* are the exemplars. Probably, also, another work unfortunately inaccessible to us, the *Canonic variations* for organ on the Chorale 'Von Himmel hoch, da Komm' ich hier,' composed in the last years of his life. Sir Hubert Parry, in his account of this work, describes how, in the last of the eleven variations, the canons come tumbling out one after another, close upon each other's heels. It may be that these Variations in canon are more readily appreciable than the many difficulties of the Musical Offering or the Art of Fugue. They were handed in by Bach, as an exercise, on joining the Mizler Association for Musical Science, in Leipzig, and were composed in 1747, only three years before he died. In thinking of his final contrapuntal masterpieces, of which this is to be numbered as the third, we must express gratitude, in our admir-

## *A little March*

ation for him, that he lived too early to become involved in the arguments for symphonic form. Too much of his Germanic energy and thoroughness might have been wasted upon the orchestra. The Suites or Overtures and the Brandenburg Concertos are sufficient. Those are enough to show that the orchestra of the eighteenth century was not suited to his genius. That he was too big for it. That, in fact, its restrictions, into which he could not fit himself except in a string of dances and *galanrieren*, impeded his greatness and brought him inferior, in this respect, to Handel. The orchestral music of Bach is even provincial when it is compared with that of Handel, if we except such a masterpiece as his Concerto for two violins. Where his forms had room for their natural growth he is supreme. That is why he is to be preferred on the organ to in the orchestra. That is why, not the Forty Eight Preludes and Fugues only, but the six French and the six English Suites, which are heavier in texture, the seven Partitas, more lengthy and important still, the Italian Concerto, the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, are so imperishable as works of art. That is why the stray Fugues and Fughettas, the Six Little Preludes, the Twelve Little Preludes and Fugues, are so individual in experience. That is why short pieces, such as the Fantasia in C minor (with an unfinished Fugue), written in Italian style, and so purposely bringing in the crossed hands that it is meant, evidently, as a pasticcio of Domenico Scarlatti, or the little Marches and Polonaises found in the notebook of his second wife, Anna Magdalena Bach, are so perfect as small works of art.

The drums and banners of one of the little Marches, in particular, and its turkey step are realized in so small a space that it is as simple as a folk song, and yet is the epitome of parade and pipeclay. We see the parterre of soldiers in their red coats, white leggings, and high, half sugarloaf caps, planted like flaunting tulips in rows, flamed scarlet and white, and after a little manoeuvring they dismiss, but, for another moment, the drum taps on. Bach brought as much skill and workmanship to these miniature pieces as to the greatest works of his intellect.

But upon clavichord or harpsichord Bach has one rival, Domenico Scarlatti. For it might be possible, after a lifetime at this music, to prefer Scarlatti. That much must be admitted. Domenico Scarlatti was a supreme artist, and a specialist. His physical energy and vitality were given to this one task only. His intellect was not quicker than that of Bach, but it was more human, in the sense that he was more sophisticated and of the world. He had elegancies of manner that were below the contemplation of this other, with his provincial background in a small North German town. At the same time, what might have been superficial in Domenico Scarlatti was redeemed by his exquisite taste and sense of poetry, having been brought up, too, in music, in the strict school of his great father. Domenico Scarlatti had in him the virtues of Italy, while it is difficult to find in him an Italian fault. Bach had in him the German virtues, a humanity and genius which belong to all time and to the whole world, but the German prolixity, and on occasion only, the faults of their thick speech. At the back of him there was the shade of Veit Bach, his ancestor,

## *Organ music*

who was a miller and baker, and there were the shades of the Thuringian town musicians

But few persons are privileged to know in entirety Bach's organ music, while those who have written upon it are concerned, naturally, with its technical analysis. Thus it comes about that some of the supreme works of the human intellect and imagination have to depend upon occasional performance and have been left unrelated, in aesthetics. Even Dr Schweitzer, who can explain the musical imagery of the *Cantatas*, being an organist himself, seems to consider that the organ works are accessible and makes little or no attempt to group them according to their form and meaning. When removed from their purpose in a transcription, these pieces take on lesser and diverted values. Their ancient language is translated into that of the concert hall or drawing room. But of Bach, at least, there need never be an end. He has, ever, something new to say. His old and familiar music is reborn with a different meaning, or some tremendous work by him is heard for the first time. This could happen until the end of a long life, so that it becomes a positive benefit that so much is hidden. The organ compositions are the great works of Bach as a solo player and his only opportunity to appear in that character to a big audience, and above all to himself, for they were written, we may be sure of it, for his own pleasure.

In the result we have such works as the *Passacaglia*, which take their place with the most superb creations of the human spirit, with the greatest poetry in any language, and with the most sublime in painting or in architecture, but which, hardly yet, have been judged along those parallels. The *Passacaglia*, because it is the unique work by Bach which bears that name, is even in a favoured situation for discussion. What can be done, though, if only for purposes of identity, among the three *Fantasias* and *Fugues*, five *Toccatas* and *Fugues*, six *Trio-Sonatas*, seven *Fugues* without introduction, and twenty six *Preludes* and *Fugues*? The six *Trio-Sonatas* can be reserved, at least, as chamber music for they can be played upon the harpsichord or pedal-piano. Of the *Preludes* and *Fugues* there are those which are early works and can be set aside, and, again, there are, among the rest, the eight *Short Preludes* and *Fugues*, leaving, in all, some twelve organ *Preludes* and *Fugues* to rank with the *Passacaglia* and the best of the *Fantasias* and *Toccatas*. This is an opus which, given the opportunity, it would not be difficult to discuss in the manner which we should wish for it. Their basic principles, not technically but in imagery and aesthetics could be assembled and compared. We could class them according to their moods of pleading, rolling, dancing, gliding, soaring, marching, according to the architecture of their entrances and terminations, according to the mingling and intonation of their voices. There is that step which, in the words of Dr Schweitzer, is like the treading of the grapes, and another which depicts a heavenly exultation, or indeed the footsteps of creation, for life springs up where it has trodden. The *Passacaglia* would seem to consist of many poses or arrangements of a pleading figure, in which affection is touchingly portrayed, and the acceptance,

## Passacaglia

also, of whatever may be coming. But the phrase or figure is in double profile, as it were, for, as well, it expresses infinite love and compassion on the part of the creator. The same figure, with a little difference, conveys the one or other. In the form of the Passacaglia this is all clothed in springtime beauty as are the personalities in an Italian painting of the Quattrocento: that is to say, the exquisite pathos and loveliness of the phrasing and the modulations make the wild flowers of the foreground, so that the forms are advancing through a flowering meadow and the repeats and interweavings of the shape confine the valley and carpet it with flowers. Are they the living or the dead? They have their children with them, and they are holding flowers in their hands. The form sways and dances, slowly. It is almost a Sicilienne. But the intonation is always upon the pleading. And the Passacaglia is followed by a Fugue in which the authentic voice of God is heard, in linked or joined syllables, in the form of a chorale with which the strains of pleading are combined, conveying the answer or assurance. This fugal portion of the Passacaglia is inexorable, and even terrifying. It mounts to a climax, though the voices of pleading and of pity are still heard in it, and the whole passionate and gigantic structure manoeuvres for its ending, throwing out buttresses, tying itself with ropes, moving bodily forward, and dying away in pious wonder. No musician, beside Bach, has been able to build up these formal shapes with so full and fiery an intensity, to render them so completely the vehicle of creation. His Chaconne for solo violin is a parallel instance. Again, its close knit form, without the returns and shackles of the Sonata, allows him to build up a drama that is nearly unbearable in poignancy and depth of feeling, and which is so miraculous in conception and so gigantic in scale, of such mortal meaning, moreover, that it is utterly incredible, and makes all other music, whatever, except, perhaps, that of the passing moment, to sound trivial and false. We have called attention, already, to the rolling figure of the organ Toccata and Fugue in F major, and we would compare the opening of another organ Toccata and Fugue in C major, an effect which is strong and magnificent, almost beyond credibility, in its expression of masculine force, like the sudden view of some fantastic architectural frontispiece, approached by processional staircases and flanked by towers, so high and old that the weeds and flowers grow from them, the western façade or El Obradoiro, as it is called, of the Cathedral of Santiago da Compostella, shall we say, seen, suddenly, in the sun after a shower of rain, in all its ancient and quasi-Indian magnificence, to which succeeds a flowing melody that depicts the laughing valley and the loaded vines. Or again, the organ Prelude and Fugue in E flat major, another late work of the Leipzig period, which opens didactically, like a lesson in the catechism to a small boy,<sup>1</sup> until, after a bar or two,

<sup>1</sup> I may not be believed when I state that my clue to the meaning and import of this Prelude in E flat major was written before reading in *The Art of Bach*, by A. E. F. Dickinson, 1936, that this Prelude introduces the Catechism Preludes. Nevertheless it is true, and perhaps some more of my imagery may be confirmed by such an instance of intuition on my part.

## *Prelude and Fugue in E minor*

wonder and astonishment supervene at the length and breadth of the divine exposition, and it comes to its masculine conclusion and begins once more. It has completed the argument, and now gives proof as it progresses on its way. If you listen you will be convinced. Of what? That there are purpose and design. That there is benevolent intention, but that humanity must help itself. That the masculine will can bring order into the world. And the argument is repeated with overwhelming emphasis, and is indisputable, at the end. The Fugue that follows is of a primal simplicity, it would seem, until its tremendous nature becomes apparent. It is concerned with dogma, as though setting forth to give theological proof by mathematics. that is to say, it is one of the deepest, musically, of all the Fugues of Bach and at first hearing, therefore, dry and, we have said, so dogmatic in effect, until the passionate ending and the problem proved. Such is this tremendous and cataclysmic work, for it is no less than that. As serious as the paintings of Michelangelo in the Sistine chapel, as tremendous in scope as Dante's *Purgatorio*, but devoted, as it were, to the spreading of light, to the diffusion of day, of logic, into the primal darkness.

But we have kept, till last, what would seem to be the greatest wonder of the whole. We intend the organ *Prelude and Fugue in E minor*, again a Leipzig work. This begins, impressively, as any organ *Prelude* of Bach, and probably of intention, or in order to give itself the time to climb into its dizzy height, relaxes somewhat its hold upon our interest, until it has prepared its place of advantage, and is ready. This wonderful work of art has no less than five themes that rise spontaneously, as it were, from the structure and rhythm of the *Prelude*, two of them being more important than the others, although it is true to say that all five are not audible to the amateur at every hearing. But the visual knowledge that they are there must add something to the enjoyment of the professional musician. The structure seems to rise up or lift itself into the immortal air with much evident soaring of wings, and upon a series of steps or paired notes, infinitely varied, but recurring continually, sometimes in a marching or a dancing rhythm, and at other times like the coupling of a pair of pillars or columns, when, in fact, these are the props or stays of this universe, for it is too great in scale to be mere architecture. They are more comparable, then, to the parts of some immense engine, being, certainly, the means or machinery of its propulsion. And it circles in the distance. It is climbing steadily, and will come back.

The sensation is as though some enormous subject was banking out of the clouds above our heads. It is only to be indicated in terms of the aeronaut, in fact, of those who gaze into the heavens. It comes steep down from a steep height, and like in sound to those organ pipes of Spanish cathedrals that point out horizontally over the heads of the congregation, ending sometimes in the carved head of a Moor in his turban, as though they were the mediaeval artillery or culverines, comes down with cannon blazing, and having reached the bottom of its trajectory, just over our heads, soars up again into the empyrean. This process is accompanied by

## Michelangelo

the steps or paired notes which, now, are definitely the scale motifs that commentators have identified in Bach as being associated in his mind with ideas of rejoicing. After this climax there comes another period of preparation, an interval which is filled with religious contemplation, almost as though in excuse for the unearthly excitement of what has gone before. But it comes back again. The return is more thrilling still. From a steeper height, and still more tremendous in its dive down above our heads. Once more the process is repeated. The religious interval, and then the terrific descent or entrance of the theme, which steadies, now, for the conclusion, and like the great white cumulus, cloud-like, sails levelly away.

The Fugue begins at once, seeming, by some illusion in space, to come after with scarce a pause at all. Its theme is a handful of notes, indeed a scale passage for the fingers, up and down, like 'chopsticks', of little significance in itself, but leading to a stupendous counter subject, the irruption of which can only be compared, in simile, to the descent of an angelic Michelangelo figure with knit brows, employed upon some process of thought which has become action, a young male angel, or more properly, the face of creation itself, and therefore, the countenance of God. This revelation comes again, and more than once, but now the Fugue sets off at a tangent, in a new direction, a thing for which it is condemned by the purists, as also, because this middle portion of the Fugue continues on its way for a hundred and twenty bars, which is as long as the beginning and end of the Fugue put together. It consists of a huge treading or skirting, or a system of manoeuvring for play, into which that magnificent counter subject breaks in, with superb utterance, while the ascending scale passages prepare its entrances. After each appearance the rhythm steadies itself a little, and a quiet or pause comes in the measure, to allow time for the mind to wonder and prepare for more. The whole of this section, allowing for those intervals, is miraculous in its energetic strength, rising to tremendous climaxes that are foreshadowed when the onward march of the entire structure is broken by the fluttering of great wings as the force of creation, fearful but benevolent, comes down again upon the Pentecostal gales. A huge agitation or churning of the airs precedes each appearance, while, if we study its successive entrances, they are accomplished like a *tour de force* with manifest difficulty, which enhances the miracle, or it comes down, triumphant, like the lightning of the storm, in a splendour and terror that take the breath away. After this tremendous passage, whatever it presages, the strict Fugue returns again, and having stated the argument, dies away in wonder, and the Fugue is ended.

The fugal subject of this terrific work has been characterized as meaning nothing in itself. It is not a tune at all, nor yet an epigram, but, more accurately, a rhythm, merely, balanced by a trill. But it is enough, being as indefinite, for a germ of creation, as the faces and figures seen by Michelangelo upon the plaster of the wall. It would not sound, even, to have particular musical possibilities. There has, merely, to be a beginning. No mental message is attached to it. But inspiration comes so closely after it, that it could almost be that Bach, having devised the won-

### *'Sleepers wake'*

derful figure which follows, prefaced it, on purpose, with this nondescript opening, which is no more than the grinding of the engine's wheels, as it begins to move. A fugal subject, just as short as this, but, for contrast, full of meaning, is that of the Fugue following upon the E flat Catechism Prelude, for again this is, quite obviously, of purely religious significance. That is proved, if tunes mean anything at all, by its chance resemblance to the hymn tune of 'O God, our help in ages past', from which circumstance it is known in England as the St Anne Fugue. There can be no doubt, then, as to its meaning. A tune, needless to say, can be parodied or distorted. A hymn tune, for instance, can be played in waltz time, but, when identity is so close as this, the meaning must be as though we had the same text in a different translation. That must be the limit of divergence. The only changed sense is in the ending, which, with Bach, portends not sturdy defence but abstract meditation. In the beginning, the invocation is the same, that is to say. The identical God is addressed in it, but the melodic line is inward looking and falls back upon itself. As to the meaning of a phrase in music there could be no more clear example than the organ Chorale 'Ein' feste Burg'. We need not be told that this is a setting of Luther's anthem, or that the same melody is to be heard again in the Chorale Cantata (No. 80) written by Bach for the Reformation festival of 1730, which was the bicentenary, as well, of the Augsburg confession, for the tune is Teutonic, of the century of Durer and Lucas Cranach, as much as the 'sea tunes', 'Rule Britannia', or even 'Hearts of Oak', are Britannic, of the age of Nelson, breathing as they do, the salt airs of Trafalgar, Greenwich, Portsmouth, Plymouth, or The Nore. It was Wagner who said that the national character of the English was portrayed in the opening bars of 'Rule Britannia'. To a like extent, the German Reformation is apparent in 'Ein' feste Burg'. The Chorale Cantata, with accompanying drums and trumpets, is overwhelming in grandeur of effect, with alternating chorus, strophe and antistrophe, given forth and answered by the voices, culminating in the open, foursquare rendering of the Chorale hymn in four parts.

The Cantata 'Wachet auf' (No. 140), known to the English audience as 'Sleepers wake', which is another great masterpiece in the old German mode, the tune having been composed by a priest, Philip Nicolai, in 1599 after a plague in his parish, should be heard sung by the Catalan choir of Barcelona, because the nasal, Spanish voices of the boys add still further to the ceaseless and imperturbable surging of the sacred rhythm. It goes on its way, supported, as in some great procession, that is spiritual and not physical, by the phrases of the chorale. Never, indeed, can there have been such rhythm. And the voices surge up into it in a manner that stills the blood, but rubs its hands upon our hearts to bring the life back. Voices cry down from the watch tower till the whole heavenly city of parable is awake. We may use our own discretion as to whether we hear in the opening, with Dr Schweitzer, the virgins starting up from sleep to wake each other, and the preparation for the coming of the Heavenly Bridegroom, later, a dance of the virgins who strew flowers before His way, or,



## *Catalan choir*

in the end, where the Chorale is sung in plain chant, unadorned, the music of the Heavenly wedding feast. The images cannot be decided in precise terms. All that is certain is the surpassing wonder of the music.

The Easter Cantata 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' (No. 4) should be heard, also, sung by the Catalan choir, for it is unforgettable in majesty, proceeding at the same slow pace of ceremony, to the wonderful and solemn plainness of its end. Here, again, the Spanish voices, with their addition of Latinity, increase the warmth and fervency of the music so that the starched ruff and plain dress of the Lutheran pastor are not present, and we are in the Middle Ages. Particularly, we say, when it is performed by Spaniards. For it is interesting to compare with this any good rendering of the Cantata 'Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende' (No. 28), in which comes the Chorale written by Kugelmann about 1540 and known in this country as the Old Hundredth, phrase by phrase, verse by verse, delivered, commented upon, and then resumed, by strings, oboes, trombones, and organ. Old German melodies by Martin Luther and his contemporaries form, of course, the basis for Bach's Chorale Preludes for organ, and supply the material for many of the great choral movements in his Cantatas. Of that incredible total of a hundred and forty-three Chorale Preludes for organ in their three different modes, plain and reflective in the style derived from Pachelbel, the decorated or coloratura in the style of Böhm, or treated in fantasia fashion in the manner of Buxtehude, of the three hundred and nineteen Chorales harmonized by Bach, and among the two hundred and eight Cantatas, and the hundred or more additional Cantatas that are lost, making three hundred, perhaps, in all, as to two-thirds, it may be, of this total, Bach was working in the old German manner. Among the incunabula. For that is how we would consider it. These are the incunabula of Northern music, corresponding to the woodcut pictures of the Reformation period. But the music is greater than the draughtsmen. Or is it that we only hear it through the mind of Johann Sebastian Bach?

The early German masters, in music, those we mentioned, together with Heinrich Schutz and Samuel Scheidt, were men of the seventeenth century, spread over three human generations, but all born after the Reformation. They invented the art form of the Chorale Preludes, but, mostly, did not compose the Chorale tunes. The greatest name among them, and the foremost German composer before Bach, was Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672). Closer knowledge should enable us, at once, to recognize the influence of Böhm or Pachelbel, of Scheidt or Schutz or Buxtehude, Reinken, or indeed of others who have been long forgotten. Not that the Chorale Preludes of Bach are consciously archaic, but he takes, in them, the current pabulum, tunes which were a hundred or two hundred years old and known to all the population, and gives to them their Germanic setting. In this way, and in part through his own forebears of the same name, was the old German style of Bach invented.

Bach is computed to have written the Cantatas at the rate of one a month for twenty or thirty years of his life. In spite of their sacred pur-

## *'Hunting' Cantata*

pose there can be no doubt that he regarded them as music of occasion, for passing performance, and felt no scruple in detaching portions of them, or otherwise altering and incorporating where it suited him. The Secular Cantatas, few in number (there are only twenty-three), could, on the same principle, be convertible, from Profane to Sacred. The Dresden Court Cantata 'Die Wahl des Hercules', the giant being an Electoral Prince who was eleven years old, had most of its music embodied a year later, in the Christmas Oratorio. Another of the Secular Cantatas was used, as well, for the same purpose, while a chorus from yet another Cantata was employed by Bach for the Osanna of his Mass in B minor. But it so happens that two of the most lovely and well known of all his melodies occur in a Secular Cantata, afterwards to become immortal in their sacred setting. One of these, moreover, is in the pastoral style and the other in the old German manner.

Their occasion was in the 'Hunting' Cantata, 'Was mir behagt'. The year was 1716, so that it is the first and earliest of these secular compositions. Bach went with his master, Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, upon a birthday visit to Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels-Querfurt, whose remote capital lay a day's ride of thirty-five miles away, through the Thuringian forest. A great hunt was to be held. The Duke's birthday was 23 February, when the deciduous trees would be leafless, but the hunt will have been chiefly in the pinewoods. In the landscape, as it might be, of Dürer or Altdorfer, passing through the magpie villages of black and white. Near Weissenfels the country becomes more hilly and, according to an old guide book, 'the vine is cultivated with some success'. It is this contrast that we find in these two airs, one romantic and the other pastoral. The Cantata was given, we suppose, upon the birthday evening, and the musicians, presumably, had been brought from Weimar. Salomo Franck, of whom the name is the most poetical part, had written the libretto. The characters are Diana and Endymion, Pan and Pales. Dr Lemprière, whom we have consulted, tells us in his *Classical Dictionary*, that Pales was the goddess of sheepfolds and of pastures. Her festivals were called Palilia. The ceremony consisted in burning heaps of straw, and in leaping over them. No sacrifices were offered, but the purifications were made with the smoke of horse's blood. The purification of the flocks was done with the smoke of sulphur, of the olive, the pine, the laurel, and the rosemary. Offerings of mild cheese, boiled wine, and cakes of millet were made to the goddess, and it was during the original festival that Romulus first began to build the town of Rome. Such was the curious occasion for these two immortal airs, for the two songs of the goddess Pales were that known, in translation, as 'The Sheep may safely graze', or 'Flocks in pastures green abiding', and that which, twenty years later, in 1735, reappeared in the Sacred Cantata 'Also hab Gott die Welt geliebt' (No. 68), from which it is familiar as 'My heart ever faithful'.

No description could exaggerate the beauty of this pair of melodies. When we remember their occasion it may remind us of the immortal

### *'The sheep may safely graze'*

tunes in *Figaro*, were it not that those are taunted with the theatre. We have to recall, again, the hunting party for the prince's birthday, and the bucolic setting. At the palace of Herrenhausen, outside Hanover, in an upper room, there are paintings by a Dutch or Flemish painter that depict Ernst Augustus, the first Elector and father of our George I, with his hawks and huntsmen. They are probably the most detailed pictures of this subject that were ever done, in large cartoons that call for tapestry, and that could be illustrations for a treatise on falconry. The hawks are on the wrist, in their hoods and chains, and there is much delight to be had, besides, from the horses, the liveries of the huntsmen, their horns and equipment, and the curious portraits. It could be, with little difference, the hunt of Weissenfels, and it should be in this spirit that we listen to 'The sheep may safely graze' and its companion air 'My heart ever faithful'. Behind that, with only the subtle change of Sacred to Profane, there is the hunting party. The first mentioned of these tunes is broad and flowing, with all the physical healthiness of Handel, preceded by a recitative of heavenly beauty, to which the lapping rhythms of the pastoral succeed, vale upon vale, among the wattle fences of Virgilian calmness and serenity, tinged, though, by the radiant clouds and rounded shades of trees, till we are reminded, perforce, of 'Opening the Fold', 'The Bright Cloud', 'The Rising Moon', and the pastorals of Samuel Palmer, painted at Shoreham, when he was under the influence of Blake, and the lovely melody becomes English in this association.

The other tune, which has been more familiar for many years, is more pointed and angular in its beauty. There is more in it of the German primitive. This is great music because of the world of purity and faithfulness in which it moves. By some miracle it is, musically, the whole expression of its text, so much so that it is, spiritually, a tune that could be offended against, and that, in certain circumstances, we would not dare to remember, or to sing to ourselves. Of no other music could this be true, except of some simple tune remembered from childhood with poignant or particular association. It is the answer given in the second half of the first phrase of 'My heart ever faithful' that lays bare the humanity of this far away but ever youthful tune. It repeats again, and then lifting itself upon what has been said and settled carries the mood a little further, and stating it once more until we are in that landscape of long ago with the steep houses, up the stair into the many windowed attic where the red apples lie, gives to us the little village or Thurmian town, it does not matter where, for it could be in Hungary when Veit Bach lived there as miller and baker, or in one of the Saxon towns in Transylvania. Certainly there is a winding street of steep houses that leads up a hill. This is an instance, in analysis, of the rising figure in Bach's music that Dr Schweitzer interprets to mean the lifting of the human heart. We are in that world of musical images that he describes, and of which he was the first serious interpreter. He remarks the notes, in repetition, that mean spiritual crisis, the toll of funeral bells, in warning, but sometimes welcomed, and even, in the Cantata 'Christus der ist mein Leben' (No 95),

## Italian Concerto

insisted upon, in a tenor aria that calls repeatedly for the bells of death, which are imitated in the bass

There are the sounds, as well, of knocking or hammering, like the midnight knocking at the door which awakes the porter in *Macbeth* and brings him to the gate, or less intermittent, with quicker blows, it means divine judgement, or, with a figure of wild trembling, the last, dread day of all There are the rhythms, again according to Dr Schweitzer, of running and following Paired notes can mean a heavy, dragging walk, while a weary, limping rhythm portrays fatigue and the approach of death Running is closely echoed by a running figure, and following by an imitation in two or more voices The marching rhythms can be grouped according to their different meanings, in degree of pride and confidence, exultant or in triumph There is that measure which Dr Schweitzer identifies as the treading of the wine press, according to an image from the Old Testament, pictures of storm, and of the calm of evening, the coiling of the serpent, portraying evil, or the silvery, captivating laughter of the angels Paired notes, in a light and dancing rhythm, intend running water, while quick scales, ascending or descending, mean clouds or waves

If such be the musical language of the Cantatas, first translated and described by Dr Schweitzer, who had the curiosity, also, to follow it out among the Chorale Preludes by tracing and comparing the same figures as they occur in both, then there must be meaning elsewhere, when there is occasion for it Not in the dances and *galanteren* of the French or English Suites, not in the Brandenburg Concertos, for their frame and purpose do not allow of that But this incredible genius was the master of all styles In this respect there is only Shakespeare to compare with him What is the intent of the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue? The Italian Concerto, on the other hand, has no need for any further meaning Its late date (1735), infers, in all probability, that Bach had come across the Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti Certainly, it is identical in manner with the Fantasia and unfinished Fugue in C minor for harpsichord, in which the crossing of the hands betokens the Italian influence, and which was a late work composed in 1738 We could call them Venetian or Neapolitan according to our mood, not in the shallow effects of Italian opera, but they are Italian by their light and shade, of deep cornice and pediment, as though in a dramatic lighting that never was in the little Thuringian towns This Concerto 'in the Italian style' has an opening theme derived from Georg Muffat, one of the many forgotten composers of whom Bach made a study, but the answer to it is so skilful in construction and so perfect in idiom that the work is in a category to itself This is not in the 'Italian style' of Vivaldi, but of a different character altogether. Bach knew the music of Vivaldi very well indeed, to the extent of arranging sixteen of his violin Concertos for harpsichord But there is no evidence that he had come across more than a stray Sonata or two by Domenico Scarlatti, and we are left to infer that the Italian Concerto of Bach is, therefore, 'Italian' in an ideal sense, but that, by intuition, it approached

## *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*

the style and mannerisms of Scarlatti, who was, by turn, Venetian, Neapolitan, Portuguese, or Spanish, according to the vicissitudes of his career, but, in fact, in all things, Mediterranean or Southern. The slow movement of the Concerto, though beautiful in itself, is of another identity, not Italian in texture or sentiment, but the mood returns and we come, too soon, to the last cadences of the sparkling, exhilarating Italian scene. We would attach no other meaning to it than that of light and colour.

Very different in intention is the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, gigantic in scale, within its compass, and descending to the very depths of feeling. We feel, not that it is one of many works by Bach, but that it is the entire creation of a great master in itself, as though there was no need of anything further from his hand and all he had to say is expressed in it. The Italian Concerto, by contrast, is an extra work, or something added, as when we discover with delight some picture by a favourite painter, and its size and importance come as a revelation of a fresh side of his genius. One of the chief pleasures of painting is derived in this manner, since few but the expert will keep in mind the printed measurements in books and catalogues. How often have we known this happen in Venetian and Toledan churches, in Italian palaces, in the picture galleries of Europe, mostly dispersed, now, in precaution against bombing! The Italian Concerto is when the master worked directly under Italian influence, but the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue are in no Italian convention, however lightly worn. In some three or four of the wonderful Goldberg variations we detect the Italian hand, for its late date, 1742, makes it more than ever likely that Bach had seen Sonatas by Scarlatti, or, by that alchemy of human instinct, through long reflection had approximated to the unknown truth. By these three works alone, the Goldberg Variations, the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, the Italian Concerto, Bach is evident in his stupendous greatness. But when we think, as well, of the Forty Eight Preludes and Fugues, of the eighteen Suites for harpsichord, other Preludes, Fugues, Fantasies, and Toccatas, realizing that this is but Bach's clavier music, and not even the main ocean of his genius, which was for choirs of voices and for organ, then it is to know in him the master of all masters, and, with Shakespeare, the greatest light of the West, dimming the Latin glitter of the Mediterranean. All other composers are, compared with him, like lesser poets of the Elizabethan age. They worked in the same medium, but can but be mentioned with him. Their whole universe is music, but this is its fountain. He is past, future, and recurring present. Beethoven, not always, only now and then, Handel, at his most superb, and Chopin, always Chopin, are all that are left beside him. And that natural music which is anonymous, the aurs or folk tunes which are the emanation of the soil, and that, even if their authorship be known, remain no less a mystery. The wild flower can be as beautiful, and as richly scented, as that to which humanity has put all its pains. In no other music, but that of Bach, can a portentous complexity wear a calm and smiling face. The Goldberg Variations are in proof of this, for their beauty can be apprecia-

## Quodlibet

ted in ignorance of the canons at every interval from the unison to the ninth, and twice in contrary motion, which is to say, the subject is answered by its inversion. Most perfect instance of all is the quodlibet, that forms the thirtieth and last of the set of variations, for the four popular songs which it presents, in combination, at one and the same time, coalesce in their fragments into a miniature that, in its robust manliness, is an epitome of the burgher tunes that it conceals. The enormous hand of Bach has, in this, descended into microscopic detail. He is the master of all proportion, as in the little Marches and Polonaises copied into the notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach. The surface melody, so to speak, of the quodlibet is equivalent to those. The quodlibet could be four of the little Marches wrought together into one.

But the mighty hand of this Ancient intones the language of the Fugue. In the words of one who heard him at the organ 'his fist was gigantic his hand was never weary and lasted out through a whole day's organ playing. The comic style was just as familiar to him as the earnest.' That phrase may be puzzling, until we remember the Fugue subject of the organ Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, or again, the Fugue alla gigue in G major. 'Comic' is intended in the lofty style, and in the sense that figures from the Italian Comedy appear in Watteau's paintings. Those are not less serious because comedians form their subject. There can be little doubt that both theme and treatment in the two organ works that we have mentioned are in the 'comic style'. Not the light *badinerie* or *galanterien* for harpsichord, but in the manner of the greatest architecture, as though Vignola or Palladio had been called upon for buildings in the 'comic style'. This is conceivable at Caprarola or Villa Lante, or in the villas of the Venetian terra firma. The comic vein of Bach was, by nature, Northern and old fashioned, if things that are eternal need not be ephemeral and absolutely of their day. Let us think of this as Dutch or Hanseatic humour, lying from the North Sea to the Baltic, and not influenced by Italian skies, but characteristic of the high gabled buildings of the Northern Renaissance, anywhere from Brussels or Antwerp, across Germany, to Danzig, or beyond. The Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, we suggest, might be called, architecturally, a work of the Netherlandish Renaissance, coincident with late Elizabethan or with James I, and therefore, about a hundred years earlier than its actual time. Not mediaeval, nor having lost, altogether, the effects of that, but older, certainly, by a century than the date at which it was composed.

The other organ works, or a few of them at least, are too gigantic to be classified. They are only to be listened to, and wondered at. Such, truly, are works of a huge fist. This is the Ancient of all time, and musical genius has no existence by the side of him. He is the only one. The others have but little meaning. Compared with his solid sculpture they are but arabesques in stucco. It is because he, only, speaks the fugal language and moves freely in it. No other can manipulate its difficulties and make sense of them. It is too old and formidable, but, in his hands, it is the secret language of the soul and mind. It expresses what has never been

## *Pachelbel*

expressed again. It improves at every hearing, and it never stales. At the end of a lifetime all has not been said. There is ever something new, and so much of it that no one living can have heard it all.

His giant form emerges out of the Biblical past, quickening the shades of old polyphony. His sources are forgotten men. The Biblical Sonatas of Johann Kuhnau, the organ works of Frescobaldi, the Toccatas of Froberger and Merulo, Pachelbel, of whom the name, for an organist, is as suited as Thomas Tompion to be a clockmaker, for it suggests the syrinx and the dulcet tones of the organ, Schutz and Bohm and Buxtehude, such are his origins. They are his primitives. It happens, therefore, that the supreme genius of music springs from a forgotten soil, and, in view of his family history, an exceptional flowering or a hybrid that has never come again. Perhaps this analogy is not applied enough in explanation. But, possessed of it, many mysteries in the arts may yield their secret. We see the *Nozze di Figaro* as all comedy and music resumed in one, and even the side comments of farcical situation given the line of beauty. But there are artists, like Chopin, who cannot be explained at all, whom no one could prophesy, unless we consider that the invention of the new instrument, the pianoforte, made it certain that he would appear.

In the case of Bach there are almost too many reasons why he should have been. He had all the past behind him. We hear that in the pleading phrases of the Passacaglia. For the rest, it is a language and an architecture for all time. But the true secret is his Christianity. It is upon that assurance that his rolling phrases mount into the heavens. Such are the truths that his Fugues set out to prove. And there is more wisdom in him than in religion, more of truth and beauty than in all the prayers and aspirations. Many faiths, but only one true Ancient, of whom we hear the huge fist when the formal language of the Fugue begins.

## Book Eight

### AMES DAMNEES

**T**his is the story of two human beings, and of what becomes of them For as long as they are caught up in their mutual passions, they are not an ordinary man and woman What happens to them is exceptional

But we will enter, immediately, into their state of feeling

She is nineteen, and he is twenty-seven

They had passed each other, once or twice, upon Sauchiehall Street, the main street of Glasgow, a few months ago during the Autumn, and he had persuaded a friend to introduce her That was the start of it At once he began writing to her, and she answered him They had one or two meetings in the house of a maiden lady, who was in their confidence She was moved to allow this by her romantic and kind heart, and could see no harm in it

By now the ordinary, or extraordinary, has begun to work in them Already, the flame of it is so intense and violent that we can clothe them in our own imagery, and find no discrepancy in that Indeed, their ghosts can take our colours If the soul be immortal, we wonder in what underworld they hold their converse now

## 1. The Woods of Rowaleyn

It is the season when young knights go out riding in the woods When the cavaliers look up at the castle windows to see the pale wrist and the misty form behind the mullion All manner of birds are singing It is the month of May, even in the great city, no less among the merchants than in the villas of the *Decameron* There are young women whom we would paint or draw for Venus For the fine weather makes all women seem more beautiful

And the Venus, the enchantress, has gone out of town The house in India Street is empty

You could pace up and down, idly, on the pavement and not incur suspicion It is impossible, in fact, not to wait at the corner, just opposite, and in imagination breathe in the air of that room which has its windows just above the railings For that is the bower, that is the nest in the lime branches It permeates, and is impregnated with, her body Nothing else matters The huge city is, in fact, deserted, for all the crowds upon the streets There is no one in the town They are supernumeraries, mere persons of no sensibility Not in the secret, and the secret, in any case, has gone away So that morning or afternoon is like a holiday, like early



## *Toulet of a fop*

closing day Everyone is in the country For it is one of the first days of spring

But for no one else as for this young man in love

He has only to take the river steamboat in the evening Then, it is a few minutes' walk There is no boat back, that night But the spring night will not be cold His heart beats within him as he thinks of this The hours will go by like moments And he will return some time in the early morning

We shall not be so pleased with him as we climb the stairs into his attic He is a little man, a foreigner, and we are irritated by his combing and curling of his hair and whiskers By his insistent glances into the square of mirror By his pulling and tugging at his coat and waistcoat It is, in fact, a velvet waistcoat, in the fashion of the time, and he has pomaded hair His hat, lying on a chair, is a Balmoral bonnet, but it has not that implication For ourselves, owing to what we know of him, and of what will happen to him, it is the jewelled cap of some prince or courtier of the Renaissance Perhaps his pointed shoes and mincing steps bear out this analogy He is scenting himself, and eating something

It is the room of a poverty stricken young man We may comfort ourselves that in the sixteenth century, of philtres and pomanders, the most luxuriously furnished bedroom had not his comforts For he has a gas lamp, and newspapers and medicine bottles He can take the train, or catch the steamboat And, certainly, for a foreigner this Northern city is a happy hunting ground He is in the latitude of Rizzio

He has a satchel and a drawerful of letters, in different handwritings He boasts of these, and has shown a few of them, or read aloud a sentence, here and there, to the other clerks in the office For that is his livelihood He is employed by a firm of seedsmen, at a meagre wage But he has ambitions that are above his station He works with a firm of nurserymen, but, in a meaning that we shall reveal later, he could be a student of alchemy in a chemist's shop or pharmacy We infer that he claims to have advantages, or to be possessed of secrets

It is an elaborate toilet that he is making Complicated, that is to say, when we consider the small space of room that he has hired But he is arming for the lists And the spring air blows in through the attic window Coming from the woods, from the birches and the mountain ashes Should it be the cypress or the ilex? But this is a foreigner in an alien land His successes are because of that He is working the arid North His lute hangs on a fir tree The landscape is of lochs and glens Though we must transpose it, so that its truth is universal and not particular The Woods of Rowaleyn become the immortal myrtle groves, where wander the youths who died of love

This young man will be wounded, and will die, after the tournament After much jousting

In the meantime, he is the perfect little gentleman

He chooses a handkerchief and knots his tie In the corner of the room there is a dirty linen basket No pictures upon the walls, but a likeness or

## *Golden Glasgow*

two of himself, a daguerreotype, in the second drawer That is, indeed, his jewel box, his precious cabinet It is full of souvenirs And it contains his diary

But it is time to get going And he empties all his money into his pockets The chevalier, the paladin, comes down the dusty stair He shuts the front door, and makes sure that he has brought the key with him

No longer an aimless walking to and fro And an involuntary straying of his steps into the empty square Instead, he steps out with assurance The period of waiting is over Everything has changed It is as though a bell had rung, and his name been called out for his cue It is action, now Not preparation, or rehearsal Ah! how much would we give to see him, before our eyes, setting forth to conquer Perhaps, though, he is better as we imagine him to have been A little knock-kneed, with finicking walk, and a way of putting his feet down and pointing them as if for the first position in dancing But it will not do to be too scathing He is to succeed with a very beautiful and spirited young girl He conquered where many others would have failed

No one stares at him It may be that he is little and inconspicuous Yet it is his story that all women turn round to look at him In ridicule, at first, but he soon alters that It is a good plan to dress distinctively Then, everyone remembers having noticed you before You become a personality People ask each other who you can be Word goes round from mouth to mouth Even if no one knows the answer That is the way to get a reputation

It is so fine an evening that the streets are paved with gold Young women, who come past, walk by on golden pattens The smoke climbs straight into the sky The fogs of great Glasgow have been lifted and dissolved into the heavens The horses that draw the brewers' drays are like proud battle steeds But it is necessary to board an omnibus And there, a foreign accent, however slight, is sure to attract attention It is only a penny ride down to the docks, where the river steamer lies waiting Two hours' sail to Helensburgh

Probably it is an advantage that the journey has begun by water For it is an excursion into another element And it is all prelude to the supreme adventure There are ways in which a long walk restores the nerves We shall see that he thought nothing of coming back from Bridge of Allan, mostly by foot, into golden Glasgow To keep his tryst But, by that time, it was someone setting out on foot to claim what was due to him To appear on the doorstep, or below the windowsill, walking stick in hand Almost as though he wore her latchkey upon his chain In a very different state of mind Not in anticipation But in full right of possession Here and now, though, he prefers the gliding on the river Those, who are for execution, are often driven to the scaffold It is the last compliment, the last polite attention, before insult is heaped upon insult and they are kicked and struck into the underworld And they, at least, have a priest to comfort them upon the way If you are so fortunate as to believe in that In fact, his mood is changing He is losing confidence After all, he is a poor young man And she is daughter of a rich family

## *Paddle steamer*

But not on this May evening

How he could ever have doubted her for a moment! Suddenly, wonderfully, he is brought right up against her. There is this fiery, animal communion between them, which can annihilate time and space. They comprehend by instinct. They do not need to speak. They understand each other perfectly. The clandestine should be a single flower, like the celandine. It has no need of two tiers of petals. It is singlehearted, contained in itself, and self sufficient. This may be mere play of words, but there must be an analogy for the secret union, the liquefaction, of two souls. Besides, the dog rose will soon be hanging in the hedges. And it is the season, or indeed the evening in their lives, when something extraordinary is going to happen. The breaking into blossom, which, really, will be entirely personal to herself alone. But he is concerned in that, to pluck the flower. He is messenger, participant, and secret partner. The bearer of the golden rose, who puts it, even, upon its briar. And how many public thorns it has! And what subtle poison in them!

But the voyage continues, and you can see across the Clyde to Greenock. On an early paddle steamer, propelled by the crinoline. No one could fail to know such ships are feminine. This runs, like a woman, along the evening waters. The sun is setting behind the Western islands, over Bute and Arran. But their names do not matter. The soft colours of the hills are feminine, too. It would, even, be romantic to look out of the window of a railway train. This would be the hour to be walking at the edge of a cornfield, quite hidden, and to vanish for a few moments into a little wood. After a little while, to shake yourself and brush the leaves and grasses off your clothes, and both have flushed faces as you come out into the sunset. That is a tramp's life, but a poet's, also. It is not so sordid as an attic. And there is nothing to pay.

A white butterfly wings slowly, but unerringly, across the ship and flies forth, over the other side, along the water. It knows its direction, and does not hesitate. In a moment it is no more than a white sail down the distance, or a white flower blown out to sea.

Meanwhile, the ship's wake spreads out like a pair of wings behind it. In the end these must wash upon both shores. For there is not much more time to wait. It becomes like a journey up a river. And it grows dark. Just at the right moment. For it is better not to be recognized. The last few moments are as a voyage in a dream. For the vessel glides, as ghosts are said to glide. He arrives by water. He steps on shore, not like Othello, for Cassio and Montano have not come to meet him. He is alone. He goes, singlehanded, into battle. No one knows him. He is a foreigner, an alien, with a peculiar accent. And we see him vanish into the darkness.

But now we enter him and go into his flesh and bones. He is, no longer, the little undersized lover. We do not stumble against him, and wonder who he can be. For the shadow of his appalling drama sheds forth from him. He is walking alone, and deliberately, into the flames, and has come all this way on purpose for that. But we need not pity him. For it is his pleasure. It would be cruel to prevent him. Are there not nights when all

## *The worm in the pill*

the dogs of the village are abroad, and howling? In the full moon But who would not feel it upon this evening of early spring? It is instinct He will rush, immediately, into the fire And whom has it ever hurt? We shall find that it is not the heat, but the chilling of the flame that kills For it turns cold and unendurable A reptilian cold, a chill serpent that cuddles upon the heart This is the worm that coils out of the fire It is a bitter pill, and as with the firework in the cracker, when lit, a shape like a worm's crawls out from it Later on Not now The match is only just put to the tinder And what a scented bonfire! They are aromatic woods, green saplings, perhaps fircones that smell of the sweet pine That is all incense for the sacrifice

'And now the storm blows into his heart and blood Beginning with a gentle torment that is mostly pleasure With pauses of dread, and moments when he wonders why he was ever born When he wishes he were a small babe, but born to this opportunity For he was destined to this It is inconceivable that he should be allowed to miss it But it could have been arranged for some other time When circumstances were more propitious When he had more money, and there would be no reason, none at all, to hesitate Ah! how many difficulties have been put in his way But, also, how easy it has all been Like the mingling of two streams which have almost, but not quite joined, which have found their way together And then he can shake it and entirely drop it from his heart For he blows callous and pitiless, and the whole romance, now, is no more than the bleeding of a dagger Part of a ritual, part of a warrior, or a 'toff' and city clerk's initiation But more of it than comes in most men's way Ah! yes, it is exceptional Nothing like it happens to the majority In his present mood he could leave her strangled and for dead She will be quite alone and at his mercy That is the way murders are committed And the sane and coldblooded wonder why and want to know the motive As if there could be any reason, when the whole thing is fiery and unreasonable But yet, natural On the other hand he is frightened of her She is so strong in character She has urged him to this She is to be his partner in the darkening wood She has chosen him, as much as he has chosen her He had no option He could hardly have avoided it They are in each other's hands He, also, is at her mercy Perhaps the shoe will fit the other foot She may, or may not, spare him That is to say, it may, or may not, continue afterwards He may be thrown back, for ever, into the darkness And never see her again That is why he must have some assurance He must take steps to tie her down It is not enough that she is in love with him She must fall more madly in love, still, and not be able to get rid of him He must see to that He must make her sign her name, for it comes to that There are certain things that she would not be able to go back upon, without too much risk That is where he can keep her to himself and never let her go For she will have to be held firmly She is, even, too strong for him already She writes to him every day, sometimes twice in the same day, and mostly late at night, but are her letters really for himself alone? Are they not for the person, whoever he may be, who is her

### *The letter in the casket*

lover, and who happens to be himself? But who is a fiction, nevertheless, invented by her, though about to become real. A doll, or automaton, about to have life breathed into him. At her lips. And he feels himself drawn along, and depending from her. There has been some extraordinary fatality, some note of doom, of the inevitable, from the first moment that they met. He has been gathered up and whirled along. And it is coming to its climax. What does it mean? Why does she have such power over him? 'I cannot tell how I long to see you—it looks such an age since I saw you, my own sweet pet. P—— has been in bed two days. If he should not feel well and come down on Tuesday it shall make no difference, just you come—only, darling, I think if he is in the boat you should get out at Helensburgh. Well, beloved, you shall come to the gate (you know it) and wait till I come. And then, oh happiness, wont I kiss you, my love, my own beloved. I don't think there is any risk. Well, Tuesday, 6th May. The Gate, half-past ten. You understand.'

That is the letter in the casket, in the drawer of the table in the attic, and he has learned it off by heart. Not deliberately, but from reading it so often. And now he stands perfectly still, without moving, while the spring night drenches him with its peculiar, sharp feeling, and with the animal, soft imminence of this young girl of nineteen who is waiting for him until her father and mother have gone upstairs to bed. Probably reading some book aloud to them, and drawing her voice so that everyone feels tired and thinks it is getting late. Perhaps yawning, herself, so that the others will yawn, too.

How hard it must be not to tremble and grow dizzy! But not for her. No one could tell that to-night is any different from other nights. Her hand is as steady as that of the executioner who has beheaded hundreds and has another, just one more, for instant execution. Who may put it in his diary, like Sanson, under just another date and name. If her lover could see her he would be the one to tremble. For her fire is not flaming, but white hot, and hard as ice. It would be apparent that he is not himself, for her, but a form conjured up in her imagination, a fiction that she has determined upon and given life, as much as a woman gives birth to a child, that is as she would have it to be, and then she may forget about it, and if true to herself, would desert it and become interested in something else. For how long does the cat love her litter? How soon does she grow indifferent to them? The vixen is more loving and keeps her cubs for longer by her side. The wolf, also. And now it might almost seem that she is delaying her father and mother downstairs, on purpose. But it is not yet half past ten. He has come early. She knows that, because she knows what time the boat arrives. She is playing a little game of self-torment, postponing the golden moment. And there comes a long interval, and he sees the lights go out, one by one. And the lamps go up on the upper floor, and he can hear, in his fancy, the shutting of the bedroom doors. One by one. And one after all the others.

But a sudden and curious innocence is in the air. For it is a spring evening in the first week of May. Now, ninety years later, we would say

## *Little Janet*

the crescent moon, like a virgin sickle that has not yet cut the corn—as how could it, so many weeks before the harvest?—climbs the sky. The one or two stars are inconceivable in their purity, lights of diamond or hyaline in eternal time. For it is of time that such things speak to us. A time for youth. A time to be young. And you cease to be young, and grow to be middle aged and old, and there is still this utter and entire youthfulness, which is cruel and irresponsible, and innocent withal, and to which this virginal and sweet smelling purity of the spring evening is implicit, and speaks in the gentle silence, as though it was, and will always be, the voice of god, but not of the god who is prayed to in the churches. But another god, altogether, whom we remember only at particular moments and in certain seasons. At other times he is forgotten, and is no more than the shadow behind you in the wood, or following in the corn, and it is little use to be alone with that shadow running by your side, inviting rest and calling, as to-night, out of the branches, in the songs of the birds, and in the flowers of spring at the tree foot. Such are feelings that transcend the individual and are beyond words, but they are in the experience of everyone. It is a sacred trance, no more, nor less, to be remembered in silence and with a tingling of the skin. That is how the ancients knew inspiration, and it is the effect of music. This is how she will write of it in a letter to him. ‘I shall always remember last night. Shall we not often talk of our evening meetings for it is a pleasure, and no one can deny that. It is but human nature. Is not everyone who loves of the same mind?’ That will be written at five o’clock of this same morning, after he has left her. Soon, now. For the great change is impending. The moment is drawing near. And it finds her, we may be certain, looking in her mirror and making sure that her little sister, Janet, who shares her room and lies in the same bed, is fast asleep. It would be curious to see her look down at the sleeping child. This must have happened so often in human relationships. It is a convention in a play, almost, part of the miming or the pantomime. The mother weeps to lose her daughter, or the angry father shows himself at the window. But, in her case, she turns down the sheet to see that the child’s eyes are closed and to listen to its breathing. It is close and regular. Perhaps her cheeks are flushed a little in a dream, and she may move, and put her head further back upon the pillow, and be sound asleep again, all in a moment. All the time, her elder sister has not undressed. She has taken off her shoes, and that is all. Her stockings will be wet with dew. That she knows. But, in fact, we may wonder if she has not gone by herself into the garden every night and glided like a ghost in and under the shadowed branches and come back, sighing, out of the spring evening, looking behind her, and climbed to her room, like a bather from the moonlit sea who has been bathing naked, where nothing prevents her, and loves the feel of the waters and their god-like purity which is as nothing else but the freshness of the morning sky, or of an early summer night, and as full of mystery as that, of hidden voices, and of movements that are full of meaning.

In a moment the lamp will go out, and she will come down the stairs

## *The lady and the doves*

There is a wicker cage with a pair of white doves in it that hangs in the doorway. She stands on tiptoe and looks into their cage. They are awake and milk-white in the moonlight, and edge nearer to each other and begin their cooing. But it will disturb no one. Often they are cooing the night through, and if you wake up you wonder if you heard them, and are fast asleep again. But this is the first instant that we can look at her, while she moves so noiselessly with stockinged feet. She wears a dove-grey dress, not exactly a crinoline, but the skirt is long and full in the fashion of the 'fifties, and appropriate to a young girl. The dress of a beautiful young girl who is provincial, but who has been to school in London, who left school, indeed, little more than a year ago, and has come home and does the housekeeping for her mother. She is of medium height, neither short nor tall, but, as though we are familiar with this country place, and know how often she looks, on tiptoe, into the dove's cage every time she runs in or out of the house and garden, we see her, as though in memory of that same morning, standing there in the sunlight. We notice that her bell-shaped sleeve is transparent, and see the shadowed arm within it, and the hand that will hold the cup of coffee or chocolate and pass it to his lips. It is her left hand, her right will, then, be smoothing his hair or round his neck, to make him drink and leave no dregs of it. But we will continue with our description of her from that painting which, for ourselves, is identified with her, and for ever haunted by her. This murderess—if she was that—can become an obsession with all who read about her, and it is literally true that she seems to haunt or inhabit any music heard during that time, and that it will suggest her physical person and her strange history for evermore.<sup>1</sup> This can never happen to the same degree with characters from fiction. We go with *Madame Bovary* to the opera at Rouen and see a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, but we do not hear the music. The only music in *Madame Bovary* is the little hurdy-gurdy air sung by a blind beggar, once before in the novel, and then below the window when she is dying. This is of appalling effect because of its words, which have come down from the century of shepherds and shepherdesses, through the winds and tatters of the Revolution.

*'Souvent la chaleur d'un beau jour  
Fait rêver fillette à l'amour  
Pour amasser diligemment  
Les épis que la faux moissonne,  
Ma Nanette va s'inclinant*

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Smith is for ever associated in my mind with the Liebeslied Waltzer of Brahms which, so far as my imagination is concerned, she may be said to haunt. In the same fashion, the exquisitely graceful and lovely piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478, of Mozart, was spoiled for me, when I most loved it, by Hitler's murder of Rohm and his friends on the dreadful 30 June 1934. In different vein, Chopin's Mazurka in C sharp minor, No. 3, played in incredible and supernatural nuance of touch by Horowitz, makes me think of the Talking Mongoose of Cashen's Gap. Most lovers of music will have known similar sensations.

## Half past ten

*Vers le sillon qui nous le donne . .*

*Il souffla bien fort ce jour-là*

*Et le jupon s'envola'*

A hurdygurdy air You can hear that wheezing and grinding in it But the ghost of Madeleine Smith inhabits music and painting, this picture for some reason personal to ourselves, more especially <sup>1</sup> In Pre-Raphaelite detail we see the gravel path and the grass borders Beyond lie the woods of Rowaleyn She wears, as we have said, a country crinoline, and the bodice which fits so closely to her young figure, with its long sleeves and high neck, gives her the look of a nursemaid or a servant girl It is because fashions decline, and the bonnet of one generation becomes the mark of the old cottager or housekeeper in the next But, in this picture, her white hand, which is to mix the powder, and that other hand which, by coincidence, holds a cup, but only in order to feed the birds, tell that she is daughter of the house Also, the dress is smart and new and summery It is lilac, in colour, more than dove-grey, and this is the month of lilacs We know, immediately, that it is intended for the country It has a white lace collar, and what would appear to be some kind of a silk tie round her neck, which draws attention to her dark hair And this brings us to her throat, which is drawn out and elongated by her attitude, so that it is a Rossetti neck, and to her rosy and clear profile against the bird cage, and to her hair which is combed down over her ears, with a braided twist of hair, like a coronal, rising from the back of her head up to its crown, glossy and shining, and youthful as her throat and hands Nothing more than that It is the simple dress of a girl of nineteen or twenty Probably the rest of her character, in one who is so young, is determined more in her actions than in her physical appearance, which is not yet mature We have seen her in the sunshine of that May morning ('Tuesday, 6th May'), and now it burns up golden for the sunset, reddens in the furnace glow, which is full of portent, fades for the twilight, and is, now, the early summer night, at half past ten

The hour is come

He sees a grey form, only her dress and nothing recognizable of her but her shape, gliding towards him along the grass edge of the path, under the trees And she unlatches the gate for him, which he could have done, himself, and takes him in In that moment they are in each other's arms The gear of time alters They are in the shadow of the trees, and sitting at the tree foot, where no one can hear or see them Here, their compact was signed, for we will call it that, a compact of tragedy, upon a May night, when blood fell on the anemone, and their fates were signed and sealed When he rises he is dead tired, and she has awakened into life She will remember this night for ever after What, indeed, can she have

<sup>1</sup> 'Lady Feeding a Bird', by W H Deverell, now in the Tate Gallery Deverell, who was short-lived (1827-1854), and is one of the rarest of the Pre-Raphaelite painters was the discoverer of Miss Siddall, whom he saw in a milliner's shop in Cranbourn Alley, off Leicester Square, and introduced to Rossetti



## ‘Stop flirting’

thought and remembered five years later, upon her marriage night! Did she think of his dead body, dead but incorruptible—for a reason—and scored or eviscerated by the surgeon’s knife? But she never slept on this May night ‘I shall always remember last night Will we not often talk of our evening meetings for it is a pleasure, and no one can deny that It is but human nature Is not everyone who loves of the same mind? I was happy It was a pleasure to be with you’ The letter is dated Wednesday morning 5 o’c

## 2. Incognito

Through that summer and early autumn they must have had many meetings This is proved in her letters to him These consist, chiefly, of the most passionate outpourings of her love for him, but, also, owing to the peculiar circumstances in which they met, the letters are full of trivial details that, ordinarily, would have come out in conversation In almost the only one of his letters to her that have been preserved, written, we may note, the day after their first meeting in the woods of Rowaleyn, he replies to her question ‘Tell me the names of your sisters’, by a disjointed sentence interpolated next to a reproach to her for having lost her virginity to him ‘Since I saw you I have been wretchedly sad Would to God we had not met that night I am sad at what we did, I regret it very much Why, Mimi, did you give way after your promises? Think of the consequences if I were never to marry you What reproaches I should have, Mimi I shall never be happy again If ever I meet you again, love, it must be as at first I will never again repeat what I did until we are regularly married I was not angry at you allowing me, Mimi, but I am sad it happened You had no resolution It was very bad indeed I shall look with regret on that night If Mary—their spinster confidante—did know it, what should you be in her eyes? My sister’s names are Anastasie and Elmire I cannot help doubting your word about flirting You promised me the same thing before you left for Edin , and you did nothing else during your stay there I do trust you will give me no cause to find fault with you again on that score Oh! Mimi, let your conduct make me happy Remember when you are good how truly happy it makes Emile—’

Her letters, on the other hand, contain such expressions as ‘I adore you with my heart and soul My love burns for you It increases daily Oh! to be with you this night But I fear I would ask you to *love* me, and that would not do I thank you so much for these grapes, they were so nice and cool I shall not wear “crinoline” as you dont like it It is off to-day No one heard you last night Next night it shall be a different window That one is much too small A fond embrace A kiss, darling of my soul If M—— and P—— were from home I could take you in very well—at the front door, just the same way as I did in India St—and I wont let a chance pass—I wont sweet pet of my soul, my only best loved

## Mr. Minnoch

darling Oh, Emile, I wish I could throw myself in your arms, and ask you to *love me* . Oh, Emile, I dote on you, I love and adore you with my soul A kiss I see de M passing the house A kiss Another I think I heard your stick this evening (pray, do not make any sound whatever at my window) A kiss, pet love Good night A fond embrace, thy own true Mimi L'Angeher'

By this time her family have returned from Helensburgh and are living in a house in Blythswood Square It is the late winter of 1856 Her father was an architect with a big practice They kept a carriage, had several servants, and lived in a round of theatres, balls, and dinner parties, with the social life of Edinburgh near at hand Madeleine was the eldest of the children She had a sister Bessie, two brothers Jack and James, and the little sister Janet who shared her room The house in Blythswood Square, which is still standing and is, now, the offices of the British Legal Life Assurance Co., is very similar to the well built stone houses of Charlotte Square in Edinburgh They occupied two floors of it, a street floor and a sunk floor It is the corner house of Blythswood Street and Blythswood Square, and the two upper floors formed a separate house, entered by a front door, round the corner in Blythswood Street, and up a separate staircase This upper house was occupied by a middle-aged Glasgow merchant, Mr William Minnoch

Madeleine's bedroom, and there can be little doubt she chose it for herself on purpose, was on the sunk floor and it had two windows, the second pair of area windows in the side street It was next door to the kitchen, and the top of the window was on a level with the area railings Mr Minnoch lived next door Indeed, his front door was immediately next to Madeleine's bedroom That, as we shall know, was not the least astonishing part of this drama For, by now, Madeleine had become engaged to Mr Minnoch, with the full approval of her parents He was a person of fortune, and it was most suitable More extraordinary still, she wished it herself She accepted him on the 28th January, and they arranged it more particularly on the 12th March The marriage was fixed for 18th June This is stated in his evidence at the trial

But we come, now, to some extraordinary contrasts in her correspondence, and it is better to point these by quotation 'I know who it was that saw me walking to Helensburgh, and told you A few minutes before I met them I had been jumping and running with my large Newfoundland dog "Major" I have got two dogs now to make pets of, "Pedro" and "Sambo", both of them terriers They are most affectionate Their great delight is killing rats, and I assure you I gratify them in their desire My own beloved husband, my sweet, dear Pet, my darling, I love you with my soul and heart Kiss me, my fond one, a dear, sweet embrace, sweet, ever sweet Emile If P—— and M—— go, will you not, sweet love, come to your own Mimi? Do you think I would ask you if I saw danger in the house? No, love, I would not I shall let you in, no one shall see you! We can make it late—12 if you please You have no long walk Were you in Helensburgh one day about ten days ago? I thought

*'Don't look so cross!'*

it was like you, but I could not say . I do wonder if you are in Helensburgh to-night I fancy no—something says you are not . I promise I shall not go about the sts , Emile, more than you have said We went about too much I shall not go about much But one you must promise me is this, that if you should meet me at a time in B—— St or S—— St you will not look at me crossly. For it almost made me weep on the St last winter, sometimes, when you hardly looked at me Nay more—one day I met you in Glasgow, you looked so cross at me that when I went home I wrote you a note taking farewell of you I went to bed, I dreamt of you, I fancied you still loved me, and in the morning all my love for you returned Emile, darling, I think I can promise that I shall not be in S—— St on Saturday I shall go out in the forenoon, come in about half past one o'clock , and not go out again, it will please you if I do so, so I shall do it, sweet love A kiss, a fond embrace Well, my dear Emile, you did look cross at your Mimi, the other day Why, my pet, you cannot expect I am never to go on St St Sometimes I must It is not quite fair of you I have kept off that St so well this winter, and yet when you meet me, and the first time you have bowed to me this season, that you should have looked so cross When I saw you, my little pet, coming, I felt frightened even to bow to you Did you go to the concert? I did I looked at everyone, but could not see my husband I have not been out since Wednesday, when I was in a cab, and I thought I saw you in St Vincent Street, but I was not sure'

What do we gather from this composite of her utterances? That they never met in public, but only at her window, or when she let him into the house That if they met upon the street they did not dare show recognition She had no means, even, of knowing if he was in Helensburgh The most subsidiary matters, which they had no time for on their rare meetings, are mentioned in her correspondence Her childishness comes out in the references to her dogs She is a young girl of twenty, in that part of her letter, but we should not forget the sentence about her terriers killing rats A moment or two later, in the same breath, almost, she is putting irresistible temptation in his way While her parents slept, she admitted this foreigner into the house, and we know from the evidence at the trial that these interviews took place, generally, in the drawing room, but on at least one occasion, also, in the servants' bedroom, downstairs, and, also, in a lane or area at the back The maid, Christina Haggart, stated 'In the Blythswood Square house there was a back door leading to an area and into a lane She asked me once to open it for her I don't know when that was It was a good long time before Miss Smith was apprehended—weeks before, and maybe two months It was at night—I think past ten—that she asked me to open the door I was in her room when she asked me I opened the back gate into the lane I saw no person there I left it open and returned to the house, leaving the back door open, and went into the kitchen Miss Smith met me in the passage, she was going towards the back door I heard footsteps coming through the gate I went into the kitchen I did not hear where Miss Smith went to I did not hear

## *Pretty boy*

the door of my room shut I don't remember how long I remained in the kitchen I think more than half an hour I think I remained longer than usual in the kitchen that night Miss Smith had told me to stay in the kitchen She asked if I would open the back door and stay in the kitchen a little, because she was to see her friend She did not say where she was to see her friend While I stayed in the kitchen I did not know where Miss Smith was I did not know she was in my bedroom I had no doubt she was there, but I did not know it When we heard Miss Smith go to her room I left the kitchen We heard the door of her room shut, I did not hear the door of our room open I did not hear the back door of our house shut I never saw any rats in the house in Blythwood Square We were not troubled with rats I had charge of cleaning out Miss Smith's bedroom During February or March I never observed that the water in her basin was coloured peculiarly black or peculiarly blue'

The bedrooms in which the other members of the family slept were on the floor above, and at the back of the house Her father and her sister Bessie had, it is true, bedrooms that looked out at the back, above the lane, but to this adept in silent movement and dissimulation this presented no difficulties She writes in one letter 'If I cannot get you in at the back door I will take you in at the front door' Emile L'Angelher had lived in Paris, and joined the Garde Nationale during the Revolution of 1848 We may think that this night intruder had enjoyed experiences in the French capital that were unknown, or unattainable, to the staid citizens of Glasgow, but which made him the more interesting to this young girl whom he was debauching And, if he had not had such experiences, we may feel certain, none the less, that he will have boasted of them for such was his character At other times, to his men friends and the clerks in the office, he spoke of his broken heart, and threatened suicide He talked of drowning himself, and took up knives as though to stab himself One witness said of L'Angelher 'I saw quite enough of him to enable me to form an opinion of his character and disposition I formed anything but a good opinion of him I considered him a vain, lying fellow He was very boastful of his personal appearance, and parties admiring him, ladies particularly He said ladies admired him very often He told me he had met a lady in Princes Street with another lady, and she had remarked to her companion what pretty little feet he had I had said he was rather a pretty little person, and he had gone out and concocted the story of the lady's remark I never believed anything he said afterwards

It was a common thing for him to speak of ladies admiring him on the street' As against this, his spinster friend, Miss Perry, who had encouraged the romance and was the confidante of both of them, said of him 'I had a warm affection for M L'Angelher, and corresponded with him frequently I thought him a strictly moral and religious man He was a regular attender at church We attended the same chapel, St Jude's'

The reader will, by now, be aware of what is coming Emile L'Angelher is in possession of her incriminating letters, and refuses to give them up

### *Prussic acid*

He threatens, indeed, to show them to her father, for he is determined at all costs to marry her. She asks for her letters back. It is obvious that she has become tired and sated with him, appalled perhaps also by the dangers of this secret intrigue, and having recovered her senses realizes the impossibility of marrying this clerk with a salary of only a hundred pounds a year, whom she no longer loves, and who has been objected to most strongly by her family. For six months, and more, she has been the mistress of L'Angelier, while, a year before that, her father and mother who had intercepted his first letters, forbade any further communication between them. Immediately after that, she had begun admitting him, at night, after the family had gone to bed, into the house in India Street. Her seduction by L'Angelier, in the woods of Rowaleyn, was the next step. That, as we know, was in May, and all through the summer and autumn they carried on their intrigue. By early January she is tiring of him, though she continues seeing him after her engagement to Mr Minnoch. Such subtlety in deception amounts, in her case, to a second personality. But she has made up her mind to be respectable, and marry Mr Minnoch. And L'Angelier will not give her back her letters.

### 3. The Painted Cheek

She writes to him upon a day in February. I felt truly astonished to have my last letter returned to me. But it will be the last you shall have the opportunity of returning to me. When you are not pleased with the letters I send you, then our correspondence shall be at an end, and as there is coolness on both sides our engagement had better be broken. And you also annoyed me much on Saturday by your conduct in coming so near to me. I trust to your honour as a Gentleman that you will not reveal anything that may have passed between us.

The next letter, bearing an illegible postmark on the 10th of a month in the year 1857 reads 'Emile, for the love you once had for me do nothing till I see you'. It ends 'Do nothing till I see you, for the love of heaven do nothing. I am mad, I am ill'. A further letter, unposted, but found among his papers, so that she must have handed it to him, says 'But Oh, will you not keep my secret from the world? Oh will you not for Christ's sake, denounce me? I shall be undone. I shall be ruined. If you will never reveal what has passed. Oh, for God's sake, for the love of heaven, hear me. I grow mad. I have been ill, very ill, all day. I have had what has given me a false spirit. I had to resort to what I should not have taken, but my brain is on fire. P S I cannot get to the back stair. I never could see the way to it. I will take you within in the door. The area gate will be open. I shall see you from my window, 12 o'clock. I will wait till 1 o'clock'.

But Emile would not bring the letters back.

At some date in the second week of February Madeleine sent the page boy to try and buy some prussic acid for her. She said she wanted half an ounce of it for her hands, and the chemist refused to give it to her.

## *The French Bible*

Upon 21st February she, herself, bought sixpennyworth of arsenic, and signed the chemist's book. In what is presumed to be her next letter, she says 'You did look bad Sunday night and Monday morning. I think you got sick with walking home so late—and the long want of food, so the next time we meet I shall make you eat a loaf of bread before you go out.'

My head aches so, and I am looking so bad that I cannot sit up as I used to do—but I am taking some stuff to bring back the colour.'

What does this mean?

Madeleine made a second purchase of arsenic on 18th March, saying she needed it for the rats in the house in Blythswood Square, and going into the chemists' openly with a friend in order to buy it.

But here we come to the greatest mystery of all. L'Angelier was taken violently ill, with every symptom of arsenical poisoning, for the first time, on the night of 19th February, two days before she first bought arsenic. This is proved in the evidence of his landlady, and from a diary kept by him which was produced in Court, but not admitted in evidence. The part of his diary, in question, reads 'Thurs 19 Feb—saw Mimi a few moments. Was very ill during the night. Frid 20 Feb—passed two pleasant hour with M in the Drawing Room. Sat 21 Feb—don't feel well. Sun—22 Feb—saw Mimi in Drawing Room. Promised me French Bible. Taken very ill.' His diary ends on Sat—14 March, a week before the last act in this drama. It was not admitted in evidence because the judges argued that 'It was quite conceivable that vanity might lead to statements being made wholly imaginary, with a view to the subsequent exhibition of the book. A man might have threatened another, he might have hatred against him and be determined to revenge himself, and what entries might he not make in a diary for this purpose?'

L'Angelier had made some curious comments to his friends. To Miss Perry, the spinster confidante, he remarked 'It is a perfect fascination my attachment to that girl, if she were to poison me, I would forgive her.' Miss Perry said 'You ought not to allow such thoughts to pass through your mind, what motive could she have in giving you anything to hurt you?' L'Angelier replied 'I don't know that, perhaps she might not be sorry to be rid of me.' He said, also 'I can't think why I was so unwell after getting that coffee and chocolate from her.' Miss Perry understood he referred to two different occasions, 'her' meant Miss Smith. He was talking about her at the time. A Frenchman, Anédée Thuau, who lodged in the same house as L'Angelier and took his meals in the same room with him, stated 'I knew that L'Angelier was to marry a young lady. L'Angelier was sometimes in the habit of going out at night. I knew that he went on these occasions to his intended's house. I recollect one morning finding that L'Angelier had been out, and very ill in the night. I saw him that morning. I asked whether he had seen the lady, he said that he saw her the night before. I asked if he had been unwell after seeing her. He said that he was unwell in her presence.'

This would seem to refer to Madeleine's letter saying 'You did look bad Sunday night and Monday morning. I think you got sick with walking

### *'Rats, rats, rats'*

home so late—and the long want of food, so the next time we meet I shall make you eat a loaf of bread before you go out' The Lord Advocate remarked of this letter at the trial 'It proves that he was sick at the time, and looking very bad' It proves that she was thinking about giving him food, that she was laying a foundation for seeing him, that she was taking stuff to bring back her colour It proves that she was holding out a kind of explanation of the symptoms which he had, because she says she is ill herself, and it proves that all this took place the day after she bought the arsenic at Murdoch's'

After L'Angelier's second attack of illness there is a pause in the correspondence It looks as though Madeleine, if she were trying to poison him, had relented somewhat Soon she begins persuading him to go away She wants him to go for ten days to the Isle of Wight He replies to this 'The doctor says I must go to Bridge of Allan I cannot travel 500 miles to the Isle of Wight and 500 back What is your object in wishing me so very much to go south?' In the meantime, she sets off, herself, with her family for Bridge of Allan; and Mr Minnoch visited her while she was there But, before she left Glasgow, she made that second purchase of arsenic, in case, the prosecution argued, L'Angelier insisted upon seeing her She bought the arsenic on 6th March and went, that day, apparently, to Bridge of Allan On 17th March she returned with her family to Glasgow The next day she made a third purchase of arsenic, saying that the first lot had been so effectual—she having found eight or nine large rats lying dead—that she had come back to get the dose renewed What had she done with the unused second purchase of the poison? It was contended, at her trial, that having no use for it, for the moment, she must have thrown it on the fire

In her declaration to the Court this is what she said 'I have bought arsenic on various occasions The last I bought was a sixpenceworth, which I bought in Currie's, and the other in Murdoch, the apothecary's, shop in Sauchiehall Street I used it all as a cosmetic, and applied it to my face, neck, and arms, diluted with water The arsenic I got in Currie's shop I got there on Wednesday, the 18th March, and I used it all on one occasion, having put it all in the basin where I was to wash myself I had been advised to the use of the arsenic in the way I have mentioned by a young lady, the daughter of an actress, and I had also seen the use of it recommended in the newspapers The young lady's name was Gubelei, and I had met her at school at Clapton, near London I did not wish any of my father's family to be aware that I was using the arsenic, and, therefore, never mentioned it to any of them, and I don't suppose they or any of the servants ever noticed any of it in the basin When I bought the arsenic in Murdoch's I am not sure whether I was asked or not what it was for, but I think I said it was for a gardener to kill rats or destroy vermin about flowers, and I only said this because I did not wish them to know that I was going to use it as a cosmetic M L'Angelier was very unwell for some time, and had gone to Bridge of Allan for his health, and he complained of sickness, but I have no idea what was the cause of

*'Come to me, sweet one'*

it I remember giving him some cocoa from my window one night some time ago, but I cannot specify the time particularly. He took the cup in his hand and barely tasted the contents, and I gave him no bread to it. I was taking some cocoa myself at the time, and had prepared it myself. It was between ten and eleven p.m. when I gave it to him. As I had attributed his sickness to want of food, I proposed, as stated in the note, to give him a loaf of bread, but I said that merely in a joke, and, in point of fact, I never gave him any bread. On the occasion that I gave M. L'Angelier the cocoa, as formerly mentioned, I think that I used, it must have been known to the servants and members of my father's family, as the package containing the cocoa was lying on the mantelpiece in my room, but no one of the family used it, except myself, as they did not seem to like it. The water which I used I got hot from the servants. On the night of the 18th, when I used the arsenic last, I was going to a dinner party at Mr. Minnoch's house. I never administered, or caused to be administered, to M. L'Angelier arsenic or anything injurious. And this I declare to be the truth'

(Signed) 'Madeleine Smith'

L'Angelier went to Bridge of Allan the day after Madeleine and her family had returned to Glasgow. He had, previously, been away for a week or so to Edinburgh. Before he left, he asked for his letters to be sent on to him, saying that he would not be home till Wednesday night or Thursday morning of the following week. But he suddenly appeared back at eight o'clock on Sunday night, saying that he had walked for fifteen miles. His landlady asked him why he came back, and he answered 'The letter you sent brought me home.' He asked to be called early next morning, said he was much better and went out at nine o'clock, after having changed his coat, and before going out made this request 'If you please, give me the pass-key, I am not sure, but I may be late.' Half an hour later he called on a friend, who was out, as though he had some time to waste, but the rest of his movements will never be known.

At half past two in the morning the front door bell rang with great violence. The landlady came down to open it, and L'Angelier was standing there with his arms closed across his stomach. He said he thought he would never get home, he was so bad on the road. After much delay the doctor came, but L'Angelier grew worse. He asked 'Can you do anything, doctor?' and said, later 'I am far worse than the doctor thinks.' Before he died, he said 'Oh if I could get five minutes' sleep I think I would get better.' The landlady asked if there was no one he would like to see, and he asked for Miss Perry to be brought. She came too late. L'Angelier, who said nothing more, turned his face to the wall, and died.

A letter was found in the pocket of his top-coat. It was the letter which had brought him back from Bridge of Allan. 'Why my beloved did you not come to me. Oh beloved are you ill. Come to me sweet one. I waited and waited for you, but you came not. I shall wait again to-morrow night same hour and arrangement. Come beloved and clasp me



## *Dinner with the minister*

to your heart Come and we shall be happy A kiss fond love Adieu with tender embraces ever believe me to be your own ever dear fond Mimi' <sup>1</sup>

In view of his two previous illnesses, which had been accompanied by the same symptoms, and his death, the friends and employers of L'Angelier asked for a post-mortem examination to be held Eighty two grains of arsenic were found in him, and a search of his room, and of his desk at the office, revealed all Madeleine's letters to him, in consequence of which she was arrested by the police just a week after his death Her movements during the intervening days are curious to think of On the very day L'Angelier died, Miss Perry, and the Frenchman, de Mean, called, separately, upon Madeleine's father and mother to acquaint them of what happened, and to warn Madeleine that her letters had been found She denied all knowledge of his death, and said she had not seen him for three weeks previously Two evenings later, she was taken out to dinner by Mr Minnoch at the house of Mr Middleton, who was Presbyterian minister at the church attended by her family On the following morning she was missing from the house in Blythswood Square, and Mr Minnoch and her brother Jack found her upon the Helensburgh boat They accompanied her to Rowaleyn, and drove her in a carriage back to Glasgow The purpose of her flight is a mystery It may have been in order to persuade the gardener to stand by her statement that she had bought arsenic to destroy rats and vermin in the garden Or it may be she had gone to fetch back some incriminating letter In any case, this is the one movement on her part that appears to acknowledge her own guiltiness They stayed three quarters of an hour at Rowaleyn, long enough for her to find, or destroy, something that she might have wanted One of the maids stated, in evidence 'On the morning of the Thursday, when it was found that Miss Smith had left the house, I don't know if it was found that she had taken any of her clothes with her I saw her on her return, a small carpet bag, containing things of hers, was brought back with her The bag was not very small It was such as a lady might carry her night things in' Mr Minnoch continued to call at the house every day, believing that some old love affair was causing her pain and distress On the morning of the day she was arrested, he called to see her, at half past nine and she spoke to him of her own accord of L'Angelier's death, and of the rumours that he had been poisoned with arsenic She said that she had bought arsenic, herself, as she had learned at Clapton school that it was good for the complexion Mr Minnoch, also, had heard this rumour of his death by poison But he did not know L'Angelier, himself, and was not aware that she was acquainted with him

During her trial Madeleine Smith behaved with the most absolute calmness and composure She was not, of course, put in the witness-box, for that was not allowed in the usage of the time Had she been put to examination in the searching modern manner it may be thought almost impossible that she would not have revealed her secret But she was

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Smith, in her letters to her lover, writes her name, arbitrarily, as 'Mimi' or 'Mini', according to her mood

## *Pre-Raphaelite*

asked no questions at all. There are various other most obvious omissions in her trial. Her parents made no statement, were not in Court, and appear to have been asked no questions. They were protected, it would seem, by the Victorian delicacy of sentiment. Neither L'Angelier's mother, who lived in Jersey, nor his two sisters, appeared in Court. Yet it is certain that they must have had letters from him containing mention of Madeleine.

The verdict of the jury was 'Not Guilty' as regards the accusation of administering poison on the first occasion, and the Scottish verdict of 'Not Proven' in answer to the accusation of administering it on the other two occasions. Madeleine was taken below, where she changed her dress, and was escorted by her brother Jack to a side door, and a waiting carriage. They caught a train to a station near Glasgow, whence another carriage drove them back to Rowaleyn, where they arrived at ten o'clock at night.

## 4. Poison Cup

It must have been a curious homecoming, an odd unlocking of that wicket gate. The family, it would seem, were too horrified to keep her with them, relapsing, we may think, into a stony Scottish silence. At any rate, she soon left them, and went with her brother Jack to London. It is not known how she employed her time there, but five years later, in August 1861, from an address in Sloane Street, she was married in St Paul's, Knightsbridge, to Mr Wardell, her father so far relenting as to be present at the ceremony. The family, by now, lived under another name, and her younger sisters were brought up in ignorance of what had happened. Her husband, Wardell, was a designer and craftsman who was much employed by William Morris, and who drew the flowers and plants in the foregrounds of the Merton Abbey tapestries. Her marriage brought Madeleine Smith into contact with many members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and she was drawn by Rossetti more than once, as the Magdalene Rossetti, with his morbid taste in crime, will have been particularly interested in this romantic and beautiful young woman. There is a story that for her dinner parties she was the first person to introduce the fashion of dining without a table cloth, while another legend, which could be true, relates the consternation of some of those present, when, at that very dinner table, thirty years after her notoriety, conversation turned to the case of Mrs Maybrick, at that moment on trial for poisoning her husband Rossetti and his friends were, of course, aware of her identity. On the death of her husband, Wardell, Madeleine Smith went to live in a cottage at Leek, near Macclesfield in Staffordshire, on an allowance from her late husband's brother, who was in the silk trade. After a few years she is described as living in poor circumstances, and, in 1913, she crossed to the United States, where in 1914 she married an American. He died, and she continued in increasing poverty, but apparently not too reticent of her

## Styrienne

past history to consider, for a moment, the possibility of making an appearance in a film about herself And in the United States, in 1927, at the great age of ninety two, this astonishing, or only completely natural woman died, taking her secret with her into the grave

But, if we return for a moment to this drama, it is to examine an extraordinary plea that was put forward This was to the effect that Emile L'Angelier was an arsenic eater The evidence for this was of a curious nature It was advanced that he had acted, for a time, as courier to a family who were travelling on the continent, having charge of the horses, and it was alleged that he had spoken to acquaintances and fellow employees in his firm of the practice of giving small portions of arsenic to the horses in order to improve their wind Articles on arsenic eating had appeared, at about this time, in various journals, some, by coincidence, before his death, and others owing to the notoriety caused by the trial The actress, Miss Gubeleri, who was at school at Clapton with Madeleine Smith and who was part pupil and part teacher at the establishment, denied in her evidence having ever mentioned arsenic as an aid to the complexion But Madeleine Smith, in her statement at the trial, alleged that she had read of it in newspapers, and it has been argued that, if she had knowledge of these, it was because she had been given them to read by L'Angelier From the evidence given, there can be no doubt whatever that L'Angelier had toyed with the idea of eating arsenic, even if he was not an adept Also, he was seen on one occasion, in the seedsmen's office where he worked, to gather up handfuls of poppy seed and eat them, at the end of a conversation in which arsenic eating had been mentioned In other instances he spoke of it, and said he took it for his complexion, and, also, we may surmise, for more intimate, other purposes, of which a person of his temperament would not hesitate to tell his friends He is, indeed, described by those who knew him as a little, rosy-cheeked individual, with a blooming complexion, and with exceptionally glossy hair, thus applying, also, no doubt, to his moustache and whiskers In fact, a little pretty fellow, but with false aids, out of the bottle marked 'Poison'

The practice of eating arsenic had originated, in innocence, in Styria, a province of Austria, among the peasants So much we learn from the published articles in question, and from an essay, in particular, in *Chambers's Journal* This may have been the article put into the hands of Madeleine Smith by her lover It is in description of the province of the Styrian waltz or landler, a village dance of the turning, turning kind, of familiar sound because a Styrian waltz appears, sometimes, as the trio to the minuet of a Haydn symphony Whenever, in Haydn, we hear a primitive slow peasant waltz it comes from Styria, and we may be reminded, too, of Schubert's landler The background for the eaters of arsenic is that of the coloured prints of peasant costumes Wooden chalets with carved eaves and balconies, with flowering windowboxes, or peasant interiors with the tiled stove in the corner and carved wooden furniture, peasant pottery, and the aged grandparents, the young lover with a sprig of flowers in his slouch hat, and the young girl in her dirndl.

## *Musée régionale*

We are in a subalpine valley. Beyond the mountains are the cretins of Courmayeur and Aosta, limestone valleys of the goitre. Those were villages where, at the time of which we write, every fourth person was goitrous and had the hideous appendage hanging at his or her neck, swelling slowly, until it choked them. On the other side of the mountains, far from this land of pears and apples, of cherry orchards and wood strawberries in their season, but a subalpine condition, none the less. Here, there was not such poverty, nor hard circumstance. It is a land of cheeses. The cornemuse plays upon the summer evenings.

But we may find a particular valley in which the young peasants are like prize animals, primely fattened. Waxed and glossy in appearance, with rosy cheeks, and eyes that glisten, but like eyes of glass, like the eyes in the head of a doll. Open or shut, but always with the same expression. It is as though their skin, their exterior, was of another texture from that of other beings. And, in fact, their flesh is incorruptible. One of the horrors attached to poisoning by arsenic is that the criminal, by his own handiwork, preserves the dead body of his victim. It is always noticed, when the grave is opened, that the corpse has not experienced the usual processes of decay. The skin is blooming, but the body is more like a wax-work figure than a living person. How much more must this be the case when arsenic eating has been indulged in, of free will, and on purpose, over a period of years, during the long protractions of a peasant courtship! With no evil consequence, but only in order to conform to the ideal. To the waxwork standard. For it is impossible not to be reminded of the wax-work figures of peasants in local museums, wearing the costume of the region. Those are haunted interiors. The very objects and utensils of peasant life by which they are surrounded become like the souvenirs of crime, and are repellant to the touch.

If it is possible that Madeleine Smith, under the influence and at the instigation of L'Angelier, had dabbled with arsenic and, in order to please him, had taken it in small quantities, and used it as a cosmetic on her person, then the whole affair between them takes on another and more lurid light. No evidence was ever given of L'Angelier's having purchased arsenic, although it was to the advantage of the prosecution to prove that he had done so. Only a small quantity, though, would have lasted him for many months, for as long as a woman can keep a bottle of her favourite scent. He may have bought arsenic in Paris, it is possible that he procured a quantity in London. One thing is certain. It cannot be mere coincidence that he had spoken of arsenic eating to his friends, and that Madeleine Smith, his mistress, a young girl of nineteen who had just left school, should have known of its uses, and its potential danger.

Obviously he must have told her of it, and, perhaps given her a pinch of it to swallow, or persuaded her to use a dilution of arsenic as a cosmetic on her face and neck and arms. There is even an argument, heard only in whisper, but surviving from persons who were contemporary with the case, that it was by an extension of this cosmetic practice that he met his death. Not, then, from the poison in the cup of cocoa, unless she handed

### *'I would forgive her'*

that to him, also, from the window at the end of their last meeting. But, also, for nothing in human relationships is too extraordinary to be true, it may be that he drank deliberately, knowing it was poisoned. It has even been thought that he may have poisoned himself, wishing that the blame should fall on her, and having made those entries in his diary on purpose so that she should be suspected. Suicide by arsenic might be considered to be out of the question owing to the appalling agonies of dying by arsenical poisoning, but yet there have been cases of it. Again, there is the possibility that he accepted the cup of cocoa from her hand and dropped arsenic into it, with or without her knowledge. He may have determined to kill himself on leaving her for the last time, or it may have been a sudden impulse. He may have told her what he was doing. And she may have known, and not prevented him. Indeed it is almost too easy to think that she administered the poison. But there are other possibilities. Why did L'Angelier, on his deathbed, ask to see Miss Perry? He never asked for his mistress. He never spoke of her, although he must have known that he was dying. 'It is a perfect fascination my attachment to that girl, if she were to poison me, I would forgive her. I can't think why I was so unwell after getting that coffee and chocolate from her.' Those had been his words to Miss Perry. Had he sent for her, now, when he was dying, in order to tell her that his suspicions were confirmed and that his mistress had given arsenic to him? Or had he made those two remarks for the reason, only, that his planned suicide, or his frequent suicidal impulses when crossed in love (of which there was much evidence brought forward at the trial) should be laid at her door, and that she should be charged with it? In any case he wished to tell Miss Perry something before he died. That Madeleine Smith had poisoned him? That once more, once and for ever, it had been in the cup of cocoa?

Or there is another explanation. That he knew there was poison in it. That, after enjoying the favours of his mistress, for the last time on earth (this part of it a secret of which Miss Perry had been told nothing), refusing to give her back her letters, but accepting the pretence in her last letter that she still loved him, words had been spoken which meant that they could never meet again. She, then, handed him the cup of cocoa and, knowing his fate, he drank of it. He accepted sentence of death and made no resistance. He took it in his hand, willingly, and drank down the poison. Was it to tell Miss Perry that he had forgiven her? That he knew, before he took the cocoa from her, what was intended when his mistress went to the mantelpiece and took the packet, and fetched boiling water, and mixed it with a spoon?

What would we not give, for its romantic interest, to have seen this last interview between them. Did he go to it, believing the sentiments in her last letter 'Come to me sweet one. Come beloved and clasp me to your heart. Why my beloved did you not come to me. Oh beloved are you ill?' Why the last two sentences? Because she was not certain if he was still living? Whether the poison had slowly done its work, and that was the reason why he had not come? And, in view of

### *'Taken very ill'*

their next meeting, to which she was beguiling him, in order to disarm him and allay his suspicions, by mentioning that she knew he had not been well? For she had to see him once again. There must be one more meeting. She would give herself to her lover, and then poison him. Or we may suspect that L'Angelier was not deceived by her letter. That he knew its falseness. But could not resist the promise held out in it. 'It is a perfect fascination my attachment to that girl, if she were to poison me, I would forgive her.' Then he knew about it, all the time. Upon two occasions, before, he had been very ill after coffee and chocolate taken from her. There was the evidence, as well, of Amédée Thuau, that he had been unwell after seeing her. That he was unwell in her presence. And, contradicting all of this, more evidence, of L'Angelier's suffering from another attack, with all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning, long before, when he had not even met his future mistress.

We find it, however, more easy to believe the story as it reads. He had been unsuccessfully poisoned twice, and made a note of it in his diary, upon each occasion. 'Thurs 19 Feb — saw Mimi a few moments. was very ill during the night. Sun — 22 Feb — saw Mimi in Drawing Room. Promised me French Bible. Taken very ill.' And, a month later, he was dead. He suspected what she was doing to him. For he had told her of the properties of arsenic, and, perhaps, given her some. It is curious that he should have made that first entry in his diary in such concise words. 'Saw Mimi. was very ill during the night.' It was almost as though she had attempted it before, and he had realized. Had begun his diary only in order to record their meetings, and whether he felt ill afterwards. For there is nothing else, practically, in his journal. But, then, he only kept it during the last few weeks of his life. Or it could be that the only purpose of the diary was to throw suspicion on her. But no! We must take it, surely, for true evidence. The purchases of arsenic from chemists' shops were proved in her case, and she was proved to be in possession of the poison. L'Angelier would not go away. He would not give her back her letters. She tried twice to poison him and failed. And, now, must try again. She wrote that last letter in order to get him back, and get him into her room. An angry letter would not bring him. It must be loving, and hold out the promise. She would take him in, 'same hour and arrangement,' at the front or back door, or at the window. With her family, as always, only a few feet away, and the maids in the next room, and Mr Minnoch in the other part of the same house, just above. And her little sister Janet sleeping in the bed.

We are to imagine L'Angelier, then, standing at her window, and directed to the door, which she opens with a white hand, holding a lighted candle in the other, but moving back with it into the shadow. He enters. And what can their first words have been? I believe we can guess from the phrases in her last letter, which was in his pocket. 'You have come sweet one. I wanted and waited for you. Oh Emile!' What is she to pretend? That she still loves him? That she longs to see him, only to lie for once more in his arms? She is in her nightgown, like the young girl of St

## *Lovers' meeting*

Agnes' Night, lit taper in hand, who stands on the stair and looks out upon the frosty night That is in Millais' woodcut, and we are reminded of her But she leads the way into the drawing room Puts the candle down upon the mantelpiece, and lies wearily upon the sofa, pretending she feels ill Is her hand trembling? Is it fiery hot, burning, burning, we wonder, or icy cold? She pretends that she is ill with longing That she is his again, altogether, and has broken her engagement? Then, why must she have her letters back? Or what other argument? That there can be some arrangement, if only he will return the letters to her? That she can put off her marriage? That she can continue living with him? That she will not be married till the summer, and there is much time till then? For if she says that she is being forced into marrying Mr Minnoch, then L'Angelher has said that he will send her letters to her father Letters which she signed 'Mimi L'Angelher', and that leave no doubt, from their language, of the intimacy between them Better, far better, that she should send him reeling into his garret Or to die in the street, upon the way home For the poison takes some minutes, or half an hour, to work in him She thinks that he will say nothing He suspects nothing He was ill before but only thought the coffee or chocolate had upset him After the nervous excitement, after the liquefaction of soul and body After he had kissed her face and neck and arms

If he dies in his lodgings they will burn his letters and belongings. What does it matter if someone ignorant finds his letters? Also, under the strain and worry, there were certain contingencies of which she could not think Certain blank spaces in her mind Certain possibilities that must take care of themselves, for she was too ill to consider them It would be better to give herself to him, once again, and ask him for the letters afterwards The best pretence for her would be that she was tired out with the worry, and could not think of the future They would meet again, in two days' time But, in fact, his death sentence was already signed, and we may think that she hardly bothered him about the letters It was more important that he should drink the cup of cocoa

How long were they together? Only a month ago he had 'passed two pleasant hour with M in the Drawing Room', the night following her first half-hearted poisoning of him He was 'very ill during the night' After this night in question the entry in his diary reads 'dont feel well' But, on the next night, he saw her again, when she promised him the French Bible, and that entry ends 'taken very ill' So we feel the interview may have been a long one We are not to suppose that anything in the nature of a quarrel took place between them He will have scolded and reproached her, and held the letters over her Had they quarrelled outright, and not had another lover's parting, she could not have handed him the death potion She could not have persuaded him to turn back for the cup of cocoa So we may think that she soothes him with gentle words, and lets him tire himself The more tired the better And takes his head upon her breast and tells him he is exhausted He has been ill lately Why is it? Had it done him no good staying at Bridge of Allan?

## *And farewell*

Ought he not to go away again, and stay away for longer? But no, for she would miss him. But circumstances had altered. There was no point, now, in her urging him to go away. It was too late. He must be gone for good and all. We may think, though, that if she contrived to effect her purpose, which was to make him drink poison, there must have been promises of further meetings. Perhaps he was, by then, in the state in which he did not bother much, but only insisted that they should meet to-morrow. They must have talked together in low tones, with long intervals of silence, and in imagination we can hear their voices. She gets up, once, and goes into her bedroom to see if Janet is asleep.

But time is drawing on. It is growing late, and cold. The fire dies down. She fetches boiling water in a kettle from the kitchen. And brings a cup out of the cupboard, and sitting on the end of the sofa, near the fire, puts up her hand and takes the paper package from the mantelpiece. Puts the cocoa powder into the cup, and pours water directly upon it. Then goes with the cup in her hand to look for some sugar in her bedroom, and comes back stirring with a spoon, and gives it him to drink. And that is all we see. She had left the drawing room for that one moment. He takes the cup in his hand and barely tastes the contents. But there is enough in a spoonful to kill a dozen men. Does it not taste bitter? No, he takes the cup from her as though he is under some spell. Or does he know the truth all the time? Does it, familiarly, as twice or more before, burn and parch his throat, as he swallows? For he says nothing. He drinks it down, only a little, but it is enough.

How can he get down the liquid arsenic without coughing? He is going out into the street, and will fall in agony upon the way home, but meet not a living soul in the great city. And now she must make him go at once. She hands him into his overcoat, because he is looking cold. She tells him he must be cold. She asks him if his teeth are chattering. She puts her hand upon his hand and leads him to the door. At the door they do not kiss. They stand for a moment, and she holds him with his head against her breast, and perhaps feels his forehead with her hand. Then he turns to go, and not looking after him, she shuts the door.

Madeleine will have lain awake beside her sister Janet, and then, with sleep working in her, turned upon her side. But L'Angelier knew by now the fate that was in store for him. It took him with full force in a few moments. Not a drunken man staggering home, but a young man dying for love, and knowing in his heart that he is to die. He has been poisoned, and, next morning, when with dying breath he asks for his confidante to come to him, what was it to say to her? That his mistress had poisoned him, and he had forgiven her? No one will ever know. He must have literally dragged himself towards his lodging. Why did he not turn back and hammer at her door? But he said nothing. He kept his secret. As he lay in agony, he must have turned it over and over in his mind until he felt quite certain.

But, if the soul be immortal, they will have met again. For ever, in deception and concealment. This young girl, who lived to be so old, has



## *'The Débutante'*

restless, and gets up, continually, to see if her little sister is asleep beside her. She does not haunt us with the cup and spoon, as she stirs the poison. But she dissimulates, and is awake while all are sleeping. Listening for the tap of his stick upon the railing outside her window, and coming to the door to open it. A ghost in the big city, and in the woods of Rowaleyn. Upon a May evening, when blood fell on the anemone and the compact of tragedy was sealed and signed.

## 5. Evil Visions

A young woman is embroidering a scarf, or mending a long stocking. She sits with her legs straight out before her, looking down. Her dress is thin and transparent in the fashion of the Revolution, and her neck and shoulders are left bare. But her hair is dressed elaborately, so much so that it has become a form of headdress, moulded in the shape of a hat of straw, a basket which is like a flowerpot, but combed up at the back of her head like the hair in a bust of a Roman matron. She has long pendent earrings, and a necklace or collar which must be of ribbon or black velvet. This, and her hands, one holding the thread and needle, and her straight profile, are seen against a night or ground of blackest Indian ink. But her back leans against a pillar, upon which she throws a shadow, and an appalling, thin black line, like a cord or attachment, like a linkless chain, goes round and up the pillar from her collar, and then dies away with no purpose, or could, indeed, be but the shadow of her edge of hair.

She never looks up, but goes on with her sewing.

We wonder why she is put to sit here, at the brothel door.

An inch away, or it may be through the thickness of a wall (but, being a ghost materialized, her legs and feet and the lower half of her body are in it), there is another scene. A fat woman, matriarch of the establishment, in an elaborate bonnet, with four pleats of hair that fall upon her shoulders, sits at a table. Upon that table there are a jug and saucer. She helps herself with one hand from a dish that is handed to her. She is only the matriarch. Who holds the dish before her? Whom do we see, behind?

A young woman, with muslin from her chin down to her chest and shoulders. She stands and holds the dish, but looks away. It is a muslin collar that makes her neck into a long pedestal. It has a rim or corolla that is the capital, curving from her chin to her ears. Above that, we see her face. The face of a vixen. She wears huge round earrings, and her hair is dressed in two open rings, one above the other, and open at her forehead, from which the hair is dressed up like a little straw hat, like a little basket, like a child's sand pie moulded with its pail. She has full, black eyebrows, a little nose, and thickly painted eyebrows. She is smiling, and her lips are parted. Behind her head, we see another young woman, but she is hidden in the shadow.

Nothing more. Only this first young woman down to her waist, where the table comes. But her head and neck and hair are like a vixen. Like a

## *A group of Succubi*

vixen become a woman, and handed over to the milliner and hairdresser Whom is she smiling at? The other ghost, half through the wall? For both, of course, are spectral women Not things seen, but things imagined, that transcend the truth, that need obey no laws of fact or probability

Her long neck and exaggerated red lips are horrible So is her hair Because it has been dressed with so much care, curled and pressed, and raised up into place, in the manner we have suggested, of a child that plays with the sand upon the seashore Digging with its spade and pail, making sand pies, and canals or moats to fill with water, fetching fronds of seaweed, putting a seashell here and there, waiting for the tide to wash it all away But, here, the material is powdered hair, silvery white, or blue Unless it be the vixen's own red, sandy hair For the double rings of her hair are like the vixen's brush, and the cone or castle in the middle What can that be? It has a horrible significance But, in fact, the plastic of her hair, so elaborately arranged, is that of chewed paper or butter muslin regurgitated by the medium when the false ectoplasm flows out through nose and mouth It has the consistency of whipped cream, gone stale, in the pâtisserie Of the café légeois of the last war but one Her muslin cape or collar enhances the horror Like the frill round the cheap cake She could be snapped off at her shoulders, and you would be left with this lay figure out of the public window Or in the open doorway She is the maid or young pupil, reared in the fox's earth She hands the dish, but half of her arm is hidden in the wall The purpose of her muslin frill is not for warmth Why should a ghost be dressed like this? Is their hair dressed daily, or weekly, in the shades? Is their linen laundered? Are their muslins ironed and pressed? For what is her companion sewing? Embroidering, or mending? Why is she chained to the pillar by that line of shadow?

It could almost be the collar of the garotte round her neck That tightens, tightens, with the turning of a screw But she sits, unconcerned, with her straight profile against the dark Sewing, sewing, and her heavy earrings dangle on her neck She could not be coiffed like this for execution She stays at the door to advertise what lies within And now we catch the eyes of that other young woman, out of the shadow, behind her vixen companion For she looks directly at us She is the most agreeable of the four women A lesser phantom, not wholly materialized But inviting into the darkness, none the less As if she would lead us into some inner room where the others would not know Or would not interfere But the vixen is more than ever like a vixen And we would have to pass her It is an appalling dream or nightmare They are not creatures of flesh and blood, but phantoms The succubi of an ill imagination In a house in Soho No! no! in the regions of eternal night

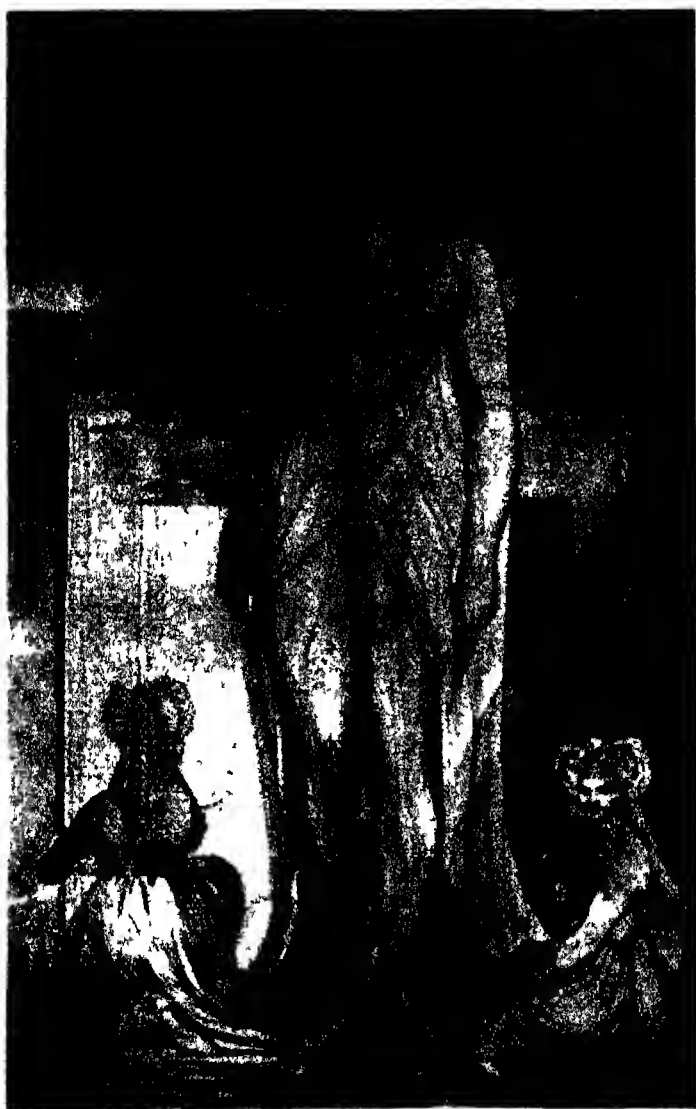
The next vision could be called 'The Fireplace' It takes place by the mantelpiece A woman is standing by the grate She is draped like an antique statue That is to say, she wears a muslin gown, from her shoulders down to her feet, but it leaves her hips and legs quite bare It is entirely transparent with the fire behind it She has the pose and limbs

## *'The Fireplace'*

of a statue Either she waits to receive someone, or she is posing to be drawn Her gown is high-waisted, in the fashion of the time, and the only ornament is at her neck, where it is frilled or ruffled to form her collar Her face and head are not those of any statue She has dark eyes, and long plucked eyebrows that nearly meet A short nose, round face, and full red lips We should say a French, or Roman, or Egyptian woman Her hair is Alexandrian, if there be any analogy at all to the extraordinary mode in which it has been dressed Piled up into a casque or helmet that fits closely to the head, but ribbed up and down, as it might be the ribs of a china honey jar, yet keeping the shape, generally, of a mitre, rising to no higher than the natural hair would be, and in little rills or scalloped volutes on her forehead, just above her eyebrows, so that if she turned her back we should see the whole coiffure like a ribbed and rounded casque made perfect after a whole day or night spent at the hairdressers No other ornament, only a bracelet upon one arm, above the elbow

Neither cup nor spoon upon the mantelpiece In an empty room Or, at least, we see no more of it Lit by the firelight Or by an illumination of its own, which, when we look again, may be gone, and all in darkness Yet the woman is standing there Waiting to receive someone, or having been asked to stand quite still And what will be her next movement? What will happen next? She must speak a foreign language We see it in her dark eyebrows and dark eyes We have a longing that she should move That we should see this statue walking She is standing, in fact, too near the fire Did we dare to touch her gown, we would feel it nearly burning, and under it her limbs and body that are scorching from the flame What if she be icy cold? Cold as a statue Incorporeal, a presence, not a substance, and striking chill into our wrists and forehead For, of course, she is another phantom She is not there at all

Look again! She has not moved She is standing in the fireplace There is a spectral horror in her attitude A statue in a nightgown, with unguent dropping hair, for her face and neck and arms are scented by it She is perfumed from her head down to her feet We know it but we cannot catch the scent Nor touch her Though she waits there to be touched Her hair is copied from a Roman or Alexandrian bust, so that she is a phantom off the streets two thousand years ago Got down from her litter, and come up in her sandals into the room But she never lived at all She only existed in an evil imagination In a fixed dream, shall we say till she had stood still for long enough to be drawn In order that she should haunt the memory of us all Proportioned as a statue, for the fire burns up and glows behind her And we look up this statue'd woman into her farded face, and upon her casque of hair which is shaped like a honey jar. Her head and shoulders are above the mantelshelf That juts out, and must nearly touch her back A fireplace and mantelpiece of the ordinary kind, in a land of coal That is to say, in London In the land of fogs and visions The dream or spectre was materialized in London That is all For she belongs to no place or time The lyre of her hips is at the top of the fireplace, where the grate ends and the mantelpiece begins Her waist is below the mantel-



THE FIREPLACE  
from a drawing by Henry Fuseli



## *The dwarf maids*

shelf So that she is a woman of normal proportion But the horror that emanates from her is due to her being like a naked statue up to her shoulders, a naked statue standing in the fireplace, and, above that, a living person, with painted face and incredible hair The wall behind her is, in imagination, like yellow alabaster or like vellum, to show off her head We know, instantly, that she is a ghost out of an evil dream

But it is not all Something is moving at the level of the statue's knee

Two figures out of another world are kneeling at her feet. Dressed as maidservants, in laced bonnets One of them is sitting on her heels with arms before her, doing nothing She looks towards, but not directly at us, the other kneels with her back to us, blowing the fire with a pair of bellows We see, therefore, their maids' dresses, with sashes at the waist, and long bows that fall behind, and the front and back view of their caps, in all elaboration They must be her attendants

But, kneeling themselves, they are only at the level of her knee If they stood, they would only reach to between her knee and thigh They are a third of her height Yet, perfect in proportion Not dwarves or midgets But only a half of the fireplace's height They could crawl between her legs She has bare feet, but we should see them stooping to her sandal Not children, they are fully grown But the particular horror of this vision is because there is no incongruity The woman is not a giantess She is of normal height She is of normal stature, as we can measure from the fireplace And yet it is perfectly ordinary that they should stand only to her knees

It may be a commonplace of dreams that we should see persons of household occupation, in miniature We have all dreamt of this breaking of the normal canon, and ever, in evil association, as though there were intrinsic evil in this diminution For it is a dream or nightmare of the firelit room, a peopling of the emptiness in the middle of the night An awakening, and a view of someone standing at the mantelpiece In the dread silence, when all is weighted with significance It may be but superstition that imputes malice to dwarves and stunted beings, as much when they are little, but perfect in proportion, as to the hunchback or hydrocephaloid who has been made weak and clumsy by deformity We have all had dreams as horrid as this, of which the evil flavour has persisted till the middle of the morning I had a nightmare, not long ago, in which an evil little figure of a man in a straw hat, with a quick step, who walked by my side, in my dream, and taunted me in the School Yard at Eton, pursued me for a great part of that day, and, indeed, his ghost may only have been laid now that I have written of him It is even possible that the particular horror attaching to a thing or a being that is a third or a quarter of its proper size is in some connection with the law of gravity according to which you may walk a few paces along the earth, you may trace out, for instance, the shadow of your house along the ground, but if you fell from that same distance out of the air you would be crushed instantly and be picked up dead It is the same sensation with which we

### *'Did she move?'*

might hold a phial of poison in our hand, and know there was death in it for several persons. The contradiction of the normal, of what we hold, or believe to be, the real. It is broken at several points in this vision of 'The Fireplace'. In that this woman, standing there, has the legs and figure of a statue, and elaborately dressed hair. And that, without warning or incongruity, she is attended by two maidservants, in cap and apron, who are no higher than her knee.

Then, again, the fireplace relates it to ordinary life. To the diurnal or nocturnal present. To the bedroom, or any other room in which one might fall asleep before the fire. While to stand in front of the fireplace is a gesture in itself, meaning that you have a right there, that it is your hearth, or that you have entered and come into possession. Who is the true owner? Is this a hired room that she moves into, on occasion, entering at dead of night, and is gone by morning? In what manner is her arrival? For she cannot come here dressed like this. In a sedan chair with a pair of linksmen? In a chariot or cabriolet? But no. She is incorporeal. You may not touch her. Yet she warms her limbs and body at the flame. She is as animal as that, while her dress and coiffure are for a lover's meeting. For him she will lift aside her muslin veil and stand naked before the fire. She will give it down to her maids, and then we shall see that it is colourless, that it has no substance, that the folding of it makes no sound. That all is done in silence, or dumb show. That not a word is spoken. That we are witnessing some extraordinary drama in which there is a dimension missing, which is the limitation of the dream. So far, even, there is no movement. It is like a tableau. Or look! Her body sways a little. We see her shoulders move. The maids moved, too. That one, particularly, who holds the bellows. So that it is exactly like a tableau vivant, in which the figures are motionless, but we can see them breathe, and move ever so slightly. Now! This moment. The little, kneeling maid moved her eyes, and her mistress swayed at her hips. Or was it but the flickering of the flames?

For a moment she could be a figure of Venus risen out of the fire. But it is not her element. She must be a divinity of the underworld. Of certain streets and marked houses. Waking at sunset, and embodied for a moment or an hour. For as long as the evil dream continues. But with volition or will of her own. For she enters into the dream. It has to be a particular mood, engendered of itself, but of fixed character. It is recurrent. It comes again, at long interval. For no reason. Perhaps twice or thrice in a lifetime, unless you learn to invoke it. Which can be done. By incantation, or the long emptying of all other images from the mind. Or it can come suddenly, when not expected. But not, altogether, to astonish you. For it is accompanied by a freezing or tension of the faculties, and an extravagant heightening of their powers. By an attachment of meaning to every detail of the vision, and since it is static, what has significance is the detail, not the incident. In fact, detail takes the place of action. The figures are heavy with meaning, as if about to move. Their effect, therefore, is the opposite of that of the dead persons in some appalling drama.

## *Aristotle on the Pygmies*

When the door is broken down When we come into the room For action has been lifted from them, like smoke from the blown out candle, when the blackened wick is left Then, objects and furniture have more significance than the dead bodies The tumbler, three-quarters empty, on the table by the bed The horrid implication of the crumpled sheets The chair overturned, and broken in the struggle By the angle at which they have been left, or the degree to which they have become implicated, or were left undisturbed, the inanimate objects have become actors and witnesses of the drama They are of more importance, now, than the dead bodies lying on the bed If they are moved, or even touched, the clue may be lost In such cases it is the drama, reconstituted, that is the interest We would know how, and why, it happened But, in a dream of the static sort, to be expressed in the words 'I saw the figure of a woman standing by the fireplace', the significance is that there is no action Nothing happens There is no history, because it is not an ordinary haunting It has no coincidence But it has meaning It is an internal emanation, the figment of some part of the mind or conscience No mere lie or invention, for it has reason Its process or method is as if we make a niche and buy the statue afterwards It is the drama or significance of the empty chair But, in the instance of 'The Fireplace', it has been invoked precisely because it is horrible that there should be someone, unknown, standing there Worse still, not unknown, for she is of horrible familiarity, like a recurring vision seen in illness It is curious enough that she should always stand there, but what is the meaning of the little mads? For it cannot be mere fantasy From time to time, even in recent years, there have been stories of the finding of little midget bones in the soil of India, and these are always referred, before it is proved to be untrue, to the dwarves mentioned by Strabo in his *Geography* He tells of a race of Pygmies who were eighteen inches high They built their houses with eggshells, while Aristotle adds the information that they came out in the harvest time with hatchets to cut down the corn, and that they rode on goats and lambs to make war against the cranes This is the instance of a fable that thrives on its improbability, as do the nonsense images in nursery rhymes To this race belong these dwarfish maids In the sense that their recurrence in the vision is in order to lend their contradiction to the jewel-like dressing and setting of the woman's hair But the exaggerated detail of their own headdresses, of their caps and veils and flowing sashes, only makes the vision more improbable, and then fixes it and makes it permanent As when some meaning or analogy is apparent in the nursery rhyme But, also, the beauty or the sinister implication of it are half mystery

The vision is not physically possible That is the point of it We know that it could not happen Why, then, does it haunt the mind? Because it is real and unreal in one single image It is there, in detail, and then utterly impalpable and defying reason But real and unreal, the two extremes, are both horrible, and weighted with this significance The lay figures have become impregnated with that horror of importance in which the ragged perambulator of the murderess, shall we say, or a



## *The static dream*

piece of stained and splashed wallpaper from her bedroom, becomes more significant than the memory of her actual crime. Or the written description of a murder could be more horrible than the crime itself. The clothes of the dead man are more significant than his corpse. It is a transference of the drama from dead bodies that were living, once, into inanimate objects that belonged to them. But, in this vision, it is the opposite of that process. The persons or lay figures have been evoked from their surroundings. It is as though we have put a dummy to lie upon the bed. In the thought that this room, or any room, could be in a house of ill fame, this figure has been invoked that, in her attributes, could be the goddess of all equivocal situations. In any place or time. In the classical drapery that, by coincidence, was fashionable at the period, and with her hair dressed extravagantly for the evening. With a pair of maids or attendants, the robbers of the piece. But, since she is in an evil sense a supernatural being or a goddess, her attendants, also, are of the underworld. This is interpreted in the literal meaning, that they are subhuman, and because they are her maids or dressers their clothes are contemporary, in obedience to that law of horror which clothes the ghost of an old house-keeper in the dress of fifty or sixty years before, when it is really the truth that fashion has descended the dark stair into the basement bedroom, and that the charwoman or old servant wears the old clothes of a generation before her time. In this vision of 'The Fireplace', while their mistress is dressed in the fashion of the Directoire, to the year and month, not forgetting the influences of the Campaign of Egypt, her maids could be of any period from the middle of that century. It is, even, important that they should be dressed in the convention of the servant. That there should be no doubt as to their calling. That it should be implicit in the way one ples the bellows, while the other kneels, with hands on lap, before the fire. Not looking in your eyes. None of the three women stares directly at you. There can be no recognition. If there was recognition, it would be as though they moved or spoke. It would precipitate the impending action. It would break the convention, as when stage dancers, who should be silent, are allowed words to speak.

The static dream, meaning that it is fixed and never changes, has always its concomitant of horror. It may consist of nothing more than a nondescript figure of no importance carrying a dish or soup plate filled with some substance of the consistency of finely chopped ham, for it has that weight and colour, but it is sprouting with short, black hairs, growing there as mustard and cress can be grown upon damp cotton wool, and yet conveying, somehow, to the mind, that it is the flesh and hair of the person that carries it, with the suggestion that this is one of the saucers filled with fat found in the bungalow upon *The Crumbles*, after the murderer Mahon had been disposing of the body of his victim. In this particular vision the figure carrying the soup plate is a composite ghost of the murderer and of the woman he had killed, dramatized, therefore, by the details of the crime, but as much the emanation of the inanimate objects in the bungalow, that witnessed the murder and its sequel, as it was

## *The waking dream*

directly inspired by, shall we say, the photographs of this man and woman in the newspapers. For it bore no physical resemblance whatever to either of the persons concerned. It was only an unrecognizable figure carrying a dread substance in a soup plate. But of which the characteristic step had memorable and peculiar horror. That was a vision or nightmare personal to ourselves. An oblique or abstract vision, in which it was not even necessary that the shadow should have features. The hurrying form was enough, intent upon its preparations.

They are, more properly, waking dreams than the long inventions of deep sleep. The tableau or pantomime of a moment, in midst of which one is awake, and not the immense and irrelevant entertainment, of which the purpose is to keep us sleeping, to mask some external sound, some interruption that might disturb our rest. Those long dreams can, indeed, be entertainment, pure and simple, and are more probable after an entirely uneventful day. They can be, therefore, innocent of purpose, and but the enlargement of what we read before we went to sleep, or the realization of some favourite and pleasurable theme. In which case we are the master of the vision, and it has imposed itself to our unconscious asking.

But the waking dream is different. It cannot be pleasant to be woken with a start. The words 'something has woken me', are seldom pleasing in their implications. It may only be that a cat has leaped upon the bed. That a coal has fallen in the grate. But it can be enough. The unconscious has that moment, only, in which to think of an excuse. It can provide no more than a tableau or pantomime. But the static dream must have its drama weighted to the stillness. If it be inexplicable, so much the better. If it be ordinary, but beyond explanation. What, for instance, is ordinary in the first vision that we described, and in the vision of 'The Fireplace', is the exaggerated detail of the headdresses. By their realism they contradict the improbability. It is as though the dream said, if there is to be no action, we must have, instead, a full drama expressed through figures that are standing still. This is to be achieved through the weighting or charging of the details. What is convincing in such a vision must be the accumulation of fact. Then you will say to yourself, all this cannot be the spontaneous invention of a moment. It cannot be all imagination. In that instant in which your eyes opened there would not be time to think of all this. For it can be remembered absolutely clearly. But, in fact, the precision is exaggerated. In ordinary life, as opposed to sleep, so much would be forgotten, or would pass unnoticed. You would never remember every detail of a woman's gown, or recall the gem-like dressing of her hair. More than all, it could not be invested with this static horror, which is utterly unreasonable and, because of that, more terrifying still.

The origin of such visions lies in the dark chambers of the mind. Those are unexplored, and are more curious than things seen. They project, we may think, all ghostly visitations, so that every human being, if we accept those terms, has a heaven and a hell in him. Those exist, and not the abstract kingdoms of the blest or damned. Although they are intan-

### *Fuseli's drawings*

gible, although they are not real. Yet, for balance or compensation, they are more real than living things. Their symbols weigh more heavily in their implications. Their machinery must be the earthy grindings of the human organs, to the extent that dreams can, obviously, be induced by indigestion. But this is no different, in degree of inspiration, from the effects of drugs, or alcohol. It is the alternative of bread, or wine, or poppy seed, and all three are poison. They are of ill effect, the more or less. The unpleasant regions of the mind are opened by them, and although we laugh at this simple explanation of the mysteries, we should remember that the deepest human spirits that have ever lived, were dependent, like ourselves, on common nutriment. The very achievements of the ascetics prove, by contrary, that this is true. By deprivation they stimulated their own visions. They were of that leaf or petal which colours by deficiency. Starvation acted like its own drug upon them. Such was the spur to their imagination. A heaven and a hell were opened in them. The deep pit and the high heaven. Of which the latter is more rare and precious, for which reason the former is the less explored. The vision of 'The Fireplace' is of the same category as the goatherd's vision on the green hillside. Only its roots are in evil. If we accept the truth of the one vision we must not deny the other. Or, if we do not believe in either, both are as dreams and can be unravell'd. Goatherd or peasant girl tells the story, and pilgrims set forth for the sacred grotto. But the goddess of evil situations has no worshippers in a world of evil.

No present worshippers, and but few neophytes, now, or in the past.

The evidence for it, together with the pair of visions that we have described, come in the drawings of Fuseli, who, in them, attempted something that no one else has done. There is a body of his drawings, which taken together, as they never have been, and never can be, would constitute the only witnesses. They may be few in number among his huge output of drawings, but they could be collected, none the less, into a series. We should, then, have a set of drawings, two or three dozens, it may be, which could be published, and a hundred, perhaps, or more, probably several hundreds, unpublishable, which would compare in quality of horror, but in nothing else, with the 'Caprichos' of Goya.<sup>1</sup> Those, which could be published, are his domestic drawings, done at different periods through his long life, but connected together by this inexplicable note of the sinister and terrible. 'The Fireplace' is dated 'Oct '98'. Others of his drawings, partaking of the static horror of which he is the master, but not impossible, and for our purposes useless, because of

<sup>1</sup> This is no exaggerated estimate of the abscondita of Fuseli, a batch of no less than forty of such drawings turned up at a London dealer's, and were eventually dispersed, in 1938-9. Many more, drawn on the margin of his letters to one particular person, appeared at the sale of a country house in Oxfordshire. It is believed that these are, now, in Switzerland. A great number of others must still exist, and their history would throw light upon many obscurities of the 'Gothick' Romantic age.

## *'The Toilet'*

their obscenity, are his illustrations to Cowper's poems. Of these, Benjamin Haydon, his pupil and admirer, remarked that 'his total want of nature stares one in the face, like the eyes of his own ghosts' It may be that the masterpiece of Fuseli is his drawing 'The Toilet', drawn and engraved as one of his Cowper illustrations in 1807. This, too, has points that are abnormal and cannot be explained, such as the vizored headdress and immense masculine arms of the attendant who dresses her mistress for the ball.

If only the whole body of his drawings had been engraved, and it were possible to collect them together under the covers of a book, we should have the most extraordinary document of abnormality there has ever been. In the sense of the uncanny and supernatural, as well as of the obscene, Fuseli had an exaggerated interest in the details of hairdressing. This is as clear from his drawings as is the curious obsession of Restif de la Bretonne and Binet, the illustrator of his novels, for immensely tall women with tiny, pointed feet. And it is, of course, a fixation of the same order, but Fuseli is among the draughtsmen, while Binet drew for illustration. It is accompanied, in Fuseli, by a parallel interest in earrings, especially, but then those are part, almost, of his exaggerated coiffures. He shows no special attention to the details of hairdressing, except in these drawings. From the other phases of his work there would be no suspicion of this. It was, so to speak, a private or secret obsession appearing in that one particular direction.

Taken as a whole, these may be characterized as the only really evil drawings ever done, evil, that is to say, in the sense in which Fra Angelico is good. But Fuseli, in his mixture of the turgid and the terrible is, as yet, unstudied. His fantasies upon domestic subjects are closely related and in some instances indistinguishable, from the drawings by John Brown, an Edinburgh painter who died young, of consumption, and whom he met in early days, from 1768 onwards, in Rome. Until more is known of John Brown, and of two more Scottish painters, the brothers Alexander and John Runciman, it will be impossible to determine the originality of Fuseli. It seems more likely that Fuseli should have influenced John Brown, than vice versa. Up to this point, in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the eighteenth century, their mutual effect upon each other is discernible in a mannerism that is reminiscent of Beardsley. Later on, when John Brown was dead, Fuseli developed into his vein of static horror. Some of the more remarkable of his drawings in this mood were, as we have noted, in illustration of Cowper, but the placid versification of that poet was only a clotheshorse to Fuseli upon which to hang out his ideas. He had illustrated Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser, in a series of large paintings, and now, with Cowper, it was only natural that his designs should outweigh their originals in importance. It was a project, dear to the Romantic, Teutonic temperament of Fuseli, to bring his frozen attitudes into the domestic poetry of Cowper. The oil paintings for these Cowper subjects must exist somewhere. A version in oils of 'The Toilet' is in the collection of Professor Paul Ganz in Zurich, containing the same three

## Janus Weathercock

figures as the magnificent drawing that we have mentioned, but with the addition of a fourth. The lines quoted are.

*'Folly ever has a vacant stare,  
A simpering countenance, and a trifling air,  
But Innocence, sedate, serene, erect,  
Delights us, by engaging our respect'*

In fact, and it could be characteristic of Fuseli, the figure of Innocence is missing in the drawing

Towards the end of his long life another confusion mixes with the obscurity in which the origins and provenance of Fuseli are hidden. Some of the more terrible of the pornographic drawings, and it is no wonder that they are not signed, may be due to the hand of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the poisoner. This extreme character was not so inconsiderable a draughtsman as we might expect. It is worthy of note that he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1821 and 1825, the year when he had to flee the country for his crimes, and that the latter year is the date of the death of Fuseli. The titles of his paintings are entirely those of Fuseli.<sup>1</sup> A few of them may still exist, somewhere. But the fact that his career as painter ended, for other reasons, in the year his avowed master died, will have meant that any secret drawings of this nature done by him, and unsigned, were confused with those dispersed from the hidden portfolios of Fuseli. In the one or two drawings that are indubitably by the poisoner's hand this obsession with styles of hairdressing and with earrings and necklaces reaches to a climax. It was a kind of fetishism implicit in the contrast of the finished toilet of his figures and the orgy suggested, or realized, in their action. Moreover, this predilection can be traced in Wainewright's writings. It was part of his affectation as a Regency paragon of art and fashion. Part affectation, but as well, of course, part nature with him. He appears to have been singularly interested in scents and dresses. Many of his articles could have been written by the female editor of a fashion paper. Wainewright shows the corruption of that taste in the inventing of sauces and boot polishes and the blending of snuffs which occupied the leisure hours of the *jeunesse dorée* during the Regency. His articles reflect the fashionable jargon of the time, but there lies underneath them, only if it is in our knowledge of what was to follow, an uncomfortable feeling that their extravagance will end in ruin, to be heard in the violent accents of the Corinthian. It would be no surprise to hear that Thurtell, the murderer of Mr. Weare, was a friend of Wainewright. Many persons will recall the tremendous description of Thurtell given by George Borrow. We could wish that he had left his impressions, also, of Wainewright, the poisoner. It should be possible to trace his pictures through the records of the Royal Academy, which would give the names of purchasers, and it is perhaps curious that the periodical notoriety in which his name and career have been involved, from the publication of

<sup>1</sup> Wainewright exhibited the following paintings at the Royal Academy: 'The Milkmaid's Song', from 'Undine', scenes from 'Der Freischütz', and 'Jerusalem Liberata', and 'Paris in the chamber of Helen'.

## *The Ghost in Hamlet*

Wilde's essay upon him until now, has never brought to light, so far as we are aware, a single specimen of his painting. But the rare drawings remain, and can be identified in the milder instances by his signature. Others must be unsigned, and a careful collation of their mannerisms might establish Wainewright as the author of drawings which emerge from time to time out of their hiding places under an attribution to Fuseli. Not those of static horror, in which Fuseli was the master, but those showing the evil tendencies of the fetchist.

However, Wainewright, as in everything, was but an amateur. After he had fled the country, during the twenty years that he lived abroad, until, too confident of himself, he returned to London and was arrested, there is no record of his having drawn or painted. An indifferent portrait drawing or two, done in red chalks at Hobart during his transportation as a convict to Van Diemen's Land, are all that remain.<sup>1</sup> But it is, at least, possible, and may turn out to be true, that in the course of his first and self-imposed exile on the continent these evil drawings were a means of livelihood to be disposed of, clandestinely, when he came secretly to England. This would be proved if any of such drawings could be dated, by signature or upon other evidence, at any year after 1825. From then, till a few years later, early in the 'thirties, they would pass, convincingly, under Fuseli's name. If such instances are ever found they will prove that the more terrible aspects of the evil, morbid genius of Fuseli are wrongly ascribed to that neglected painter, and should be given, instead, to Wainewright. The poisoner would keep his immortality, little but evil, and it would detract not at all from the achievement of Fuseli.<sup>2</sup>

'Blood, and murder, met one at every look! I expected the floor to give way—I fancied Fuseli himself to be a giant. I heard his footsteps and saw a little bony hand slide round the edge of the door, followed by a little white-headed lion-faced old man in an old flannel dressing gown tied round his waist with a piece of rope and upon his head the bottom of Mrs Fuseli's workbasket.' This is Benjamin Haydon's account of his visit to Fuseli in the year of Trafalgar. And we add to it, for purposes of comparison, the following, from the same hand: 'The finest conception of a ghost that ever was painted, was the Ghost in Hamlet on the battlements. There it quivered with martial stride, pointing to a place of meeting with Hamlet. The dim moon glittered behind, the sea roared in the dis-

<sup>1</sup> This is not quite true. A fine landscape of Sydney Harbour is illustrated in *Janus Weathercock*, the study of Wainewright, by Jonathan Curling, London, 1938. He mentions, as well, a fresco painting by Wainewright, now destroyed, and reproduces two characteristic drawings in his familiar manner, but done in Hobart. According to this authority, a good many drawings are still to be seen in early settlers' houses in Tasmania.

<sup>2</sup> The only drawing by Wainewright of this nature which had come under the observation of W. Hazlitt, who published his study of the poisoner in 1880, had for subject the well known scene from Count Grammont's *Memoirs* of the leg-comparing episode by the ladies of Charles II's court, in which one of the court beauties, Miss Price, figured prominently. But Hazlitt hints at the existence of other such drawings.

## *Sphinx atropos*

tance, as if agitated by the presence of a supernatural spirit, and the ghost looked at Hamlet, with eyes that glared like the light in the eyes of a lion. 'Such were Fuseli and his art in the opinion of his contemporaries. In a lesser way, it is characteristic of him too, that he should have had the industry to learn Dutch, the most difficult and unrewarding of European languages, in order to read a book upon a genus of moths that interested him. In all probability one of the publications of J. C. Sepp, with handcoloured entomological plates of rare beauty. But how typical of Fuseli that it should be moths and not butterflies that attracted him! The results of such study may have been the moth, as large as the figure of a man, in his painting from *Lycidas*. We are told in the life of Fuseli by his friend, John Knowles, of the special fascination that he felt for the nocturnal lepidoptera, and that books dealing with this branch of entomology were his favourite reading during breakfast.<sup>1</sup> But Knowles tells us nothing of the nocturnal drawings done by Fuseli, although he must have known. Indeed, the life, in three volumes, contains no single hint of them. Nor are they mentioned, so far as we have found, by any other of his contemporaries. So it comes about that the most significant of his works are unchronicled. And will remain so. But, at the same time, those are to be preferred, upon all grounds, that depict such scenes before the drawing aside of the curtain. Before the shuttered house, behind 'The Débutante', is entered. Before we know more of the lady standing in 'The Fireplace'.

We would quote again from Haydon: 'Fuseli was undoubtedly the greatest genius of the day. But in the world of conveying his thoughts by nature, he was a monster in design, his women are all strumpets, and his men all banditti, with the action of galvanized frogs, the dress of mountebanks, and the hue of pestilential putridity. No man had the power like Fuseli of rousing the dormant spirit of youth.' Does Haydon include himself in this? Does he anticipate his end, when he cut his own throat? Was not Wainwright numbered, at least by his own statement, among Fuseli's pupils? Does not another contemporary, C. R. Leslie, say of him 'In the Satan (of Fuseli) all is so material as to be wholly unnatural with reference to the subject. The body and limbs of the fiend are as solid as the shaft of the spear he holds, and the helmet, sword and shield seem borrowed from the property-room of a theatre?' Fuseli was obsessed, as much as ever was Berlioz, by the plays of Shakespeare. In the recently published work on Fuseli by A. Federmann (Zurich, 1927), a curious painting is illustrated, of which the subject is an actor in his dressing room, or, more properly, a boy is handing him his breastplate, and the scene is a barn, or some disused corner, anywhere. He is a strolling player. We would suggest that this is an early painting done in Italy. Not only is he a strolling player, but he is a mountebank or charlatan. For this figure exactly resembles a personage who appears in more

<sup>1</sup> 'By skill and care he sometimes reared in his house some of the rarer insects, among them, the *Sphinx atropos*, *Sphinx uphorbiae*, and others.' *Life of Fuseli*, John Knowles, 1831.



MRS SIDDONS AS LADY MACBETH  
from the painting by Henry Fuseli





### *Yellow dunces' caps*

than one painting by Magnasco, to the extent that it is obvious Fuseli must have seen and been influenced by Magnasco's pictures, doubtless without knowing the name of his forerunner, who was by then, forgotten, his paintings only passing under doubtful attribution to Salvator Rosa. The figure, in question, is curious in many ways. It depicts a tall, thin man seated, with legs apart, and is more like the ghost of an actor in his underclothes than an actor taken from life. He has long, thin features and an aquiline nose. His face appears to have the red paint on it. He has long, sparse locks of yellow Teutonic hair, or in Haydon's words 'A German ghost, and not the ghost of Shakespeare'. He wears close-fitting tights, and we can see that he is an actor, or a mountebank who treads the boards, by his shoes. Upon his head he wears a tall cap, like a dunce's cap, like the cap of the Roi d'Yvetôt at the country fair. But, also, we are reminded of the pointed, conical hats of paper, shaped like a whole sugarloaf, and painted with devils and with flames, worn by the condemned at the Autos da Fé, and in imagination we see the dreadful ceremony.

The prisoners have been woken in their cells a little before midnight, and given a vest with long sleeves down to the wrist, and a shirt which comes down to their heels. Also, a lamp, to which they are little accustomed in the darkness of their prison, they are left, thus, for two hours, and then fetched at 2 a.m., and taken into a long gallery, lit only by a few lanterns, as if for a funeral service, but filled already, down all its length, with other prisoners standing in a row against the wall, all clothed alike in black, and posed like so many statues, waiting, all in profound silence. Only, indeed, to be known from statues ranged against the wall, by the movement of their eyes, which was the last liberty left to them.

Presently, tapers of yellow wax are handed round to each of the condemned, and soon afterwards bundles of clothing are brought in, and distributed. It is the giving round of the Sanbenitos. Those of the prisoners, who persist and have been obdurate, are given another kind of Scapulary, the Samarra, of grey cloth. This has a portrait head of the condemned person, taken from life, painted on the front and back at bottom of the Samarra, upon a pile of burning faggots, with his name and crime and sentence written beneath in big letters. Above, are painted figures of devils and tongues of flame. Those of the condemned who admit their guilt are given a Samarra, of which the flames are reversed, or upside down, called, therefore, *Foge revolto*.

Immediately afterwards, five of the hats of yellow cardboard are carried in, of the whole sugarloaf shape that we described, painted with devils and with flames of fire, and with writing round them spelling the word *Feiticeiro*, which is to say, Sorcerer. These caps are called *Carrochas*, and an appalling ceremony follows in which they are fitted upon the heads of those persons accused of magic. The condemned are, now, allowed to sit upon the floor, while awaiting further orders. Later, at four o'clock in the morning, servants of the Inquisition come round with the armed guard, and give out bread and figs, to those who are able to eat. At five o'clock the day dawns.

## *Justitia et Misericordia*

A little before sunrise the great bell of the Cathedral begins to toll, and the people of the town came running out of their houses into the street. The procession is formed. As they come forth from the palace of the Inquisition some prominent citizen is attached to each of the condemned, to walk by his side and bear him company. First in the procession come the Dominicans, in black and white, because their founder, St Dominic, had been an Inquisitor. Before them goes the banner of the Holy Office, on which is the figure of the saint carrying a sword in one hand, and an olive branch in the other, with the inscription *Justitia et Misericordia*. Behind come the condemned, barefooted and bareheaded, with lit tapers in their hands, and with the citizens in charge of them by their side. In this manner they proceed to the church of the Franciscans, where the High Altar is dressed in black, with silver chandeliers lit with tapers of white wax. By the side of the Altar, two thrones are raised. Along the entire floor of the church a gallery has been made, with benches for the condemned.

As the procession comes in, an immense Crucifix is carried before them, but those bringing up the rear of the procession come behind it, so that its back is turned on them. They are those who are to be burned alive. The Crucifix has its back turned to them. They can hope for no mercy. The horrible Carrochas are upon their heads, and they wear the grey Samarra, painted with devils and with flames of fire. Last of all, four life-size statues or effigies are carried, each attached to a long pole. A man walks behind each of these figures carrying on his head a little coffer filled with bones, the bones of the person represented in the effigy, who has died in prison, or whose body has been condemned and disinterred. These coffers are painted black, with flames and devils painted on them. And the effigies are dressed, too, in the grey Samarra, and wear the horrible Carrocha upon their heads. So all of the condemned, alive or dead, are dressed alike.

After an interval of waiting, while the church fills with the congregation, there comes the sermon, preached by an Augustinian friar. And when that is finished, two officials climb into the pulpit and, turn by turn, read out the sentences. While this is done, each of the condemned stands in his place, with a lit taper in his hand. But there is a horrifying pause, in which no one dares to look round, and those persons, a man and a woman, are brought forward, who are to be burned. More horrible still, behind them, the four statues come tottering forward, held up, feet in air, more than twice the height of life, and conveying, by the mere fact that they are mounted upon a long pole, the suggestion that, already, they are bound to the stake. After each statue comes its coffer of bones, which are to be burned with it.

Their sentence is read out to them, ending with these words, that the Holy Office, being unable to grant them mercy, because of their relapse or impenitence, and finding itself obliged to punish them according to the rigours of the law, delivers them, regretfully, to the hands and justice of the secular branch, praying that body, nevertheless, to use pity and clemency towards them, and that, if the death sentence is imposed, it

## *Dolls of the Inquisition*

should, at least, be inflicted without the shedding of blood. In this manner does the Inquisition intercede for its victims. Such, also, is the extreme condescension of the magistrates of the law towards the Holy Office, to be content with burning the guilty, just to the marrow of their bones, rather than make use of its powers and cause their blood to flow. Here and now the ceremony takes place of the handing over of the condemned to secular justice. An official approaches them, for this purpose, and the Alcaide of the Holy Office delivers them into his hands, giving each one of them a light blow upon his or her chest in sign that they are, thereby, abandoned to their fate.

In a sort of hallucination we see the procession coming forth from the classical portico of the church and setting out for the place of execution, which appears to be upon a waterfront, for there are the masts of vessels in the distance. Here, again, two thrones or tribunals are prepared and already occupied, and a great crowd is gathered. But we are too dazed in mind, almost, to follow the sequence of events. All we know is the seizing of the man and woman, who are bound, hand and foot, and led, thus hobbled, to two piles of faggots, where they are tied to rings or iron staples in the pair of stakes. Fire is put to the two heaps of faggots, and we see the two figures, indistinguishable, now, as to which is man and which woman, seated, apparently, in midst of the flames, with their hands tied behind them. Near by, within earshot, are the two thrones or tribunals, of which the cords and tassels can be seen tied to the branches of the tropical trees.

But all we know are the two figures, burning, in their yellow dunce's caps. One of them leans forward, now, and tilts his cap, and has sagged down, against the stake. It is because the fire is burning through his bonds. He may fall forward into the flames. But the procession is not ended. The four statues come into view, one behind the other, seeming, from the way in which they are carried on their poles, to progress by solemn strides or bounds, without separating their tied feet. Thus they advance, slowly, and soon we shall see them burning, in effigy, with their coffers of bones at their feet. There must be a symbolism in this, as when a sailor is buried, at sea, and his belongings are dropped after him into the ocean, or when a figure in stone or metal is put up, in commemoration, over a dead body that lies below. But, here, the statue and the bones are burned together. And the statue wears the yellow dunce's cap. The effigies of the dead are come to join those who are being burned alive. Mere statues, and not flesh and bone. But their bones are borne behind them, to be burned at their feet.

The effigies of the dead are more terrifying than the living figures that are burning in the flames. For they are a ghastly mockery, and those others are but pitiful and tortured. They must wish that they, too, had been made and painted in that workshop of the damned. For, then, they would not suffer. They would perish quickly, without pain. But the statues, holding lit tapers in their fists, come forward and bestow a ghastly benediction. It is curious, indeed, to see their dunce's caps reaching

## *The dandy and the fruit barrow*

as high as the head of Christ upon the Crucifix, for Christ was tormented, too. Is not this a moment when that other statue might have spoken? But it never speaks a word. It is but an image, and another travesty. The horrible Carrocha, or yellow cap, is higher than the stake, and higher than the Crucifix.

To-morrow morning, while the heaps of ashes are still hot, they will carry the portrait of each burnt person, just the head only, upon a pile of burning faggots, with the name, below, and the name of his father, and of his native country, his crime, and the date of execution, and leave it in the church of the Dominicans. This appalling set of portraits is hung up, along the nave of the church, and above the great door, and when that wall is covered they are hung, also, along the aisles. They may number several hundreds, in all. The wooden fatuity of these rows of daubs has an added horror in that many of them, indeed the majority, are portraits of Negroes and Indians, wretched Nestorian Christians of the coast of Malabar, whose only heresy lay in their primitive, or purer state of Christianity, for which they were condemned. To a foreigner, their ill-spelt names, in Portuguese, are part, also, of this horror. They have the look of pedlars or quack doctors. We know that a Portuguese half-caste must have painted their portraits and spelt out the long inscriptions in uneven letters.

In all the churches and museums of the world there is not left one of the dolls or statues of the Inquisition. In the Sanbenito, painted with devils and with flames, with that painted head upon the faggots. A statue with a face of cloth and straw, a mere dummy formed to burn quickly, with the Carrocha, the yellow dunce's mitre upon its fearful head. Are not these more evil than the puppets of the necromancer? Than the jointed limbs of the automaton, that moves its painted underlip, that rolls its eyes, and shakes its head? That looks into the face of its interlocutor, and answers with a wheezing, high pitched voice? Than all the images of the idolators? Of which, surely, in this company, the Crucifix makes one? For it has not the blood of the legend in it, that flowed to help mankind.

But we behold the fearful statues borne aloft, and carried in procession. In contumacy. For they cheated the Holy Office by their deaths in prison. Four effigies that dangle from the ends of poles. Scarecrows of the flowerless fields of execution. During the ceremony in the church one of the statues was left leaning against the wall. And, everywhere they go, their coffers of bones go with them. Like the toy figure of the tophatted dandy, and the man who follows him, everywhere, with a wheelbarrow full of melons. Not heavy to carry. They are lifted easily upon the shoulders of one man. A mere box of bones. And the bones shake and rattle in them. Not wrapped in the damp folds of the winding sheet, but thrown in, helter skelter, with the skull that rolls. In fact, the loose bones, for the skeletons have been disarticulated, bear some resemblance to the blazing faggots or firebrands painted on the sides of the black coffins.

When they come to the place of execution they have to wait their turn. There are no other stakes at which to burn them. They are brought near

## *The Quick and the Dead*

enough to be singed in the flames. We are to have the terrible and sinister spectacle of seeing them burn at the same time as the living, before life is entirely extinguished, while there is still a hopeless flickering of life, no more than a flutter, or a fingerbeat, but it means the wretched, sagged black cinder is still alive.

For some time the fearful statues are halted. Did we not know, we should say these were the effigies of priests or sorcerers. Because they are clothed in mitres and dalmatics, in parody, which is to say, they wear the Samarra, painted with devils, and the dunce's cap, or Carrocha. Moreover, both statues and their originals are barefoot, and have the long trousers of the prisoner or galley slave. We know their heads are shaved, their faces, also, and thus, again, makes them into priests or neuter beings. The fact that they are helpless, fastened hand and foot, turns them, alike the living and the dead, into life size dolls. Some of flesh and blood, but the others, we suppose, are but stuffed with straw.

A few of the faggots are pulled aside, to make an entrance into the flames, and we see the statues propped upright on their sockets or pedestals, but leaning, in weakness, against the blackened stake, a pair of effigies to each blazing bonfire. The coffers of bones are thrown in after them, and pushed up, close to their feet, where they burn quickly, for the black paint is pitch or bitumen. It is the burning of the scarecrows. The 'big heads' of the procession are thrown upon the fire. For their pointed caps are made of cardboard. They are but dummies. They flare up, as when a rag or sheet of paper catches in the flame.

The fires are crowded with these pointed forms, for it is long before the heat reaches to their yellow hats. But they topple over, they slump down, and lie prostrate, face downwards, where it is too hot for anyone to pull them out, or rake them back again. A thick pall of smoke goes up. They disintegrate, and fall apart, and this vision of horror fades, and glows up once more, against the night.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My account of the Auto da Fé is based on Dellon's *l'Inquisition de Goa*, (Paris), 1688.

NOTE — The painting by Fuseli from *Lycidas*, referred to on page 228, illustrates the lines 'Under the opening eyelids of the morn, What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn'. The shepherds and shepherdesses in this painting, so John Knowles informs us, are only ten inches in length, but happening to find in Mr Johnson's garden in Fulham, a beautiful moth, Fuseli was so delighted with the insect that, in spite of all propriety and his better knowledge, he painted it the size of nature, hovering above the figures, with expanding wings. The present whereabouts of this curious painting are unknown.

## Book Nine

### 'SONGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME'

Such is our entry into Hell Or it could be through the ruins of any bombed and burning town Again we hear the barking of the dog Cerberus

We are seeking for someone in the world of shades, and our way is barred by phantoms It is not necessary to be a follower of any faith or religion in order to believe in this We have passed through among the damned, in their different sorts The poisoner and the poisoned, and have seen the burning pyre The reality of the phantom has been proved, in the sense that the dreaded figure comes to life, and moves The thing, most feared, has happened

The Splendours and Miseries have passed by There has been Shakespearean drama in the basement bedroom, for no one else could tell what words passed between them or the truth of the mystery We have known the white anemone in the woods of Rowaleyn We opened our eyes and saw the phantom standing by the fireplace That was not there, at all, with her pair of little maids And the figures in the dark doorway

But such figures have more reality than the flowers or pebbles of the foreground Than the portraits of persons in the newspapers They have more reality because they are our own creation Those others are but accidents of time and place These are the shadows of our subconscious souls If there be survival, it could be the subconscious, and not the conscious, soul that is immortal No one can tell Surely the souls of musicians, painters, poets, have other existence than in the mere lists of what works they have left behind them? A whisper, or a shadow upon the wall, and it is enough We need no more

Dumb humanity waits for its interpreter While the dead world waits to be woken into life again The love and beauty that we have lost must be restored to us That is the myth It may, or may not be fulfilled It may fail in the last moment If it fails, the world goes on in its misery, and many will not know that it could have been otherwise Their lives, in any case, would be unchanged For it is too late to build the world anew But the individual can lift his blind and look out on the morning The hour of 'black-out' may be altered, or even cancelled altogether For the world, at least, is born anew every morning It is only the carnivores, the eaters of carrion that waken with stale breath The winds are pure that blow from the ends of the world We can smell the rain

So the myth is playing

We hear the barking of the triple-headed monster It is the world of

## *Modern Athens*

after death and there is no more suffering Only static happiness or sadness The continuance, in fact, of the moods of life No one knows that he is dead It is not yet the hour of judgement But we are seeking for someone, and will be brought to her by a crowd of shadows Then we shall take her by the hand and lead her, but the myth says we must not look back The conditions are that we must forbear to look behind, until we have come to the extremest borders of Hell If we forget our promises, and look back into her face, she will be for ever taken from us

So will the world be lost, or won It is ours to do this, for we live but once

We hear the warbling of many birds

Upon the crocus lawns in the woods of the white paeony

Young maidens in long gowns are dancing Or we are promenading upon the golden sands Or along the street on a morning when there will be music in rehearsal

Has there been the yellow warning? How high are the balloons? Ah, no! But it is not so simple There is the drone of engines over the centre of the city It was a 'pipe' or a 'piece of cake' 'We dropped our cookies, and stayed to watch the fires begin It was a lovely party' Hell was opened, for an hour or two But that is the earthly hell It began when the bombs burst 'like flowers' upon the Abyssinians When the grey phosgene crept along the stones No! no! Here are no engines This is the classical Hell of lost opportunity and crooked purpose Here, as much as in Heaven, we shall find all persons who have ever lived Indeed, we believe in Hell, but do not believe in Heaven Or we could say that the one state embraces both conditions

Whom shall we find?

But we shall meet our own living selves, as well, for the deeds of to-day and yesterday have gone down to limbo The False Judgement is upon us, so far as the living are concerned Happy are the dead, in comparison This is the age of lead The four winds are at hurricane Keep down! Crawl into the table shelter! But the golden age lies upon the leaf The earth and the clouds are unchanged It is no different, now, from the Mycenaean morning Except for the starving For they sit, dying, among the trams of modern Athens

There is the dead body of a woman in black, ragged dress, with clenched hands A daughter of the Atridae No! no! Her father kept a little tavern, or sold matches in the street Down at the Piraeus, near the harbour And look! There are eight or nine youths huddled on a rug, in the middle of the pavement They are looking at us, in the photograph That is what is so horrible <sup>1</sup>

For they are all dying of starvation They are street arabs of Athens or the Piraeus, bootblacks, nondescript wanderers of the great city One or two of them wear the Turkish fez upon their heads They are lying on a

<sup>1</sup> Photographs of these scenes in Athens were published in the American magazine, *Life*, for 5 August 1942



### *Pharaoh's mummy*

raft in the middle of the great city They have been there for days and nights, exactly as though they were survivors from a torpedoed vessel Once every day they drag themselves to the corner of a street, near by, where the International Red Cross gives out a bowl of olive oil, dried vegetables, and rice Here is no *Oliver Twist* to ask for more, and they drag themselves back again on to their rug They are condemned to slow death, and are waiting, listless and apathetic, too weak to importune the passer by Without a leader, but in a sort of community of misfortune One and all of them, from time to time, spit blood into the gutter After a few more cold nights, with snow upon Helicon, and deeper snow upon Parnassus, their number will diminish They have no regular hours of sleeping, but lie, at night, huddled up for warmth Speaking, now and again What can it be about? If you listened, in the early morning, you would hear their voices, and might recognize which one of them was talking But there is nothing to be done No one can help them They must be left to die They were, always, near starvation, being but pariahs of the pavements, picking up cigarette ends and crusts of bread, sleeping under the café tables in the open air Thieves and little criminals One afternoon, they lift the rug by its corners and totter down the street to another encampment But, in the morning, they are back again Their hands and faces, and, it must be, their bodies are a mass of sores By that night one of them is too ill to move His dead body is taken away, but another comes to join them on the rug There has been nothing like this horror in a modern city They could be Greeks, or Spaniards or Algerians It is true we could not tell to what race they belong Dark skinned dwellers on the Mediterranean, and that is all But the shop names are in the Greek alphabet

Now let us come into the courts of the dead We will not describe the dead children lying in the morgue, in rows upon the floor But we will see the head, only, of an old dead woman A head that has the face of the mummy of *Rameses II*, the greatest of the Pharaohs, thirty centuries old The lines in the face, and the look in the closed eyes, lead downwards to the open mouth There is not a tooth in her head The lower lip is so parched and old that it is difficult to believe it is a lip at all It is but a jagged, excoriated edge, like cracked earth Under it we see the old wrinkled chin, and a neck which is no more than the vertebrae of the skeleton

Another old woman lying dead in a doorway With folded hands, and her head and back against the wall A tin can near her, for modern version of the amphora at the Castalian spring An old man in a tweed coat, that must have been given to him, with an appallingly sunken face, and no flesh upon his bones, for his jacket is so much too big for him And here they lie in rows It is remarkable that their clothes are wrinkled from much wearing, but that all bear the mark of the Orient upon them These are dead men, young men, mostly, but the garments are more dead than their wearers First, it is a courtyard heaped with dead clothing, and then you see the feet protruding Many of the faces have two or three

## *The lorry load*

days growth of beard upon them All, monotonously, have open mouths. Not all their eyes are closed yet. Their heads are disposed, this way and that, in every attitude, and expressing every acceptance of death, but not gratitude Surprise and fear, as though overwhelmed with sleep in stupor Just lifeless, not even sleeping, with a pair of naked arms that are like spindles, or with head thrown back, close to another head, as though a sword or spear has pierced their side and come to end their misery, or thrown back, in transport, as though this moment of death is supreme. Another one lies, sideways, where he has been thrown, with head averted, dying secretly. So many heads of dead men, close together, begin to lose their terror They are the dead mummies of the Catacomb Of the Capuchins But their arms and hands are frightful More still, their rags, which seem to be in torment Blown, like the flag upon the flagpole, in a gale In as many folds or creases as if they were corrugated As if a stage hurricane had blown upon them while they lay near to the footlights As if an artificial wind machine had scattered them And, in another corner of the morgue, they have come fluttering down after the tempest, and have been left just where they fell Between, and over them, there is an indescribable dust, composed of small, unrecognizable substances, the detritus of the day before, which has not, thoroughly, been swept away

For they are buried, three hundred at a time, in large pits, without lime But all we see of that is an open lorry The back of the lorry has been let down, while it waits Waits for more A man standing in front of the lorry, in a porter or policeman's cap, looks at something in his hand, as if he is making out a list, or putting down a number The bodies have been thrown in, anyhow Head first, feet first, one upon another So many heads are particularly horrible, close together, facing up, or facing down, where they will be jolted like the meat lorries with their shaking, trembling load coming from the slaughterhouse Except that those are the skinned and bleeding corpses What is so horrible about these is that they are bloodless Again it is the rags and sackcloth And we see a foot obtruding, and the corrugations of the wrappings that are as though we saw, and felt, the ribs beneath them If these were the bodies being taken away after a mass shooting the sight would be less appalling So many sudden deaths by bullet but these have withered and gone grey upon the stalk

Now look at the street It is raining, pouring with rain These are the corpses of that night and morning A woman is coming past in the wet street, with her umbrella There is a gutter, even here, and the sharp kerb of a pavement The street is clean, as though everything has been picked up from it There is no refuse This is the clean bareness of a starving city The area cat has licked it clean A wet morning, and there will be freezing rain all day Thick snow lies upon Lykabettus, the hill behind the city You could see snow upon the cypress stem There is white rime upon the hill of the Acropolis Not snow, so much as frozen rain But there will be footmarks upon the steps into the Parthenon, no deeper than if it were a lichen that grew upon the stones In the town

## *Dead women*

below only the pouring rain The man in the cap gets down and winds the handle of the lorry Then comes round, lifts up the back, fastens it, goes round to the front again, and drives away

It is of no use to pretend that existence would have been beautiful for these persons had they been alive Come down the rows of bodies and see how many have their trousers torn down and crumpled at their feet, leaving their legs exposed They were thin and emaciated before war and starvation took them But the dead women are the most terrible sight of all A long stretch of wall is reserved for them They have been thrown down in more order than the men We will not look upon their faces, but the wild gestures of their hair are indescribable All wear long ragged dresses down to their feet Many have clenched hands Their attitudes and their long gowns, hideously wrinkled into folds, make it appear as though they were dancing or capering Their bare feet even add to this To what music? To the wind that whistles round the corner of the street? To the pattering rain? To the soft-footed snow? They are not of our life at all They have lost all semblance or memory of that, and only call to be revenged They will lie in those attitudes, deep in the grave Atropos was clothed in black, she held the scissors in her hand, with threads of different size according to the length or shortness of the lives Clotho held the distaff Lachesis had the spindles near her They were inexorable, and it was impossible to mitigate them They presided over the birth of men Clotho, the youngest of the sisters, presided over the moment in which we were born Lachesis spun out all the events and actions of our lives Atropos, the eldest, cut the thread of human life with her pair of scissors Or they are the Furies, the Eumenidae, who sprang from drops of blood flowing from a wound Of grim and fearful aspect, with a black and bloody garment, and serpents coiling on their heads instead of hair, attended by Terror, Rage, Paleness, and Death

Ah! leave them! Look at them no longer come away Oh! but we cannot forget They are printed on our minds No! No! for there will be more to come In other cities It was not so different, in Madrid, from Athens There are Warsaw, Lublin, there are the million dead who died in Leningrad It is not done, yet We hear the wings go over them Death is an old woman with long, straight hair, in a robe of wire She is clawed like a harpy, and holds a scythe in both her hands All are cursing as the wings go past

Behold the ancient slums, of brick built boxes, and the modern tenements Ah! but these are particular places Along the railing, past the cab rank (those were the days of cabs), by the Crimean gun, which has been surrendered, now, for scrap iron By the fountain, of polished granite, and the public lavatory Opposite to Madame Morley, the clairvoyante and phrenologist Where the asphalted 'monkey-walk' goes, zigzag, down to the Aquarium and the sea

Or we are singing the music of 'The Arcadians', in 1907, not in the garden, but in the park at Renishaw under the sunlit trees Upon a golden August evening The shepherds of Arcady were able musicians, and

## *The Agony in the Garden*

thought themselves more ancient than the moon. Since then, I have been through Arcadia, by motor car, and stayed the night at Tripolizza, county town of the nome, or modern province. Blue flag irises were flowering in the ditches, there were herds of goats, and the inhabitants still lived on acorns. We were told that their ghost stories were of Centaurs.

Or we are walking in the woods. Bluebell woods, with a pink or white flower among them. Woods of the pink campion. All the time the colliery engine pants behind us. All the years between we could have lived in a back bedroom in a slum. But the white cornfield waves upon the hill. The walls of loose stones are instead of hedges. The pink flax is in flower upon the mounds of clinker.

In the shades, or in time, for that is what it means, we shall be walking by the canal, or along the railway line. There will be a row of houses by the Midland station, and hollyhocks and foxgloves in the little gardens. But, also, there is splendid architecture by the water. The rarer spirits do not dwell in circumstance, but are given their liberty. But the slum in Lambeth, near great Bedlam, attaches always to the genius of William Blake, for his visions and ascensions were from that smutty court, among the chimney sweeps.

The shades are few in number. No hand could count the millions of all the dead. Some are marked for immortality, though none may remember them. Those who starved in Modern Athens, are they more, or less fortunate than their brothers and sisters who died, at last, after long years of misery? Who were burned, one by one, as though they fled before the holocaust? The concern of the poet is not with the millions, but with the few. And more with the work, itself, than with any person who may come to read it. Yet we are involved, all of us, in the false Judgement Day. Will the *News of the World*, with a certified net sale exceeding four million copies, be selling down among the shades? Beyond doubt it will. *Worker's Playtime* will have become a permanence.

We live but once, and our lives are what we make them. There has never, in that sense, been any golden age, for the opportunity is always there. Six years is long enough in which to prepare for total war. Even in happier times ugliness and misery have always been. If we consider what to ourselves must seem a golden age it is to admit that the idealism and sense of poetry of the painters concealed its sordid truth. Mantegna, Gianbellini, Carpaccio, no more than Botticelli, or Benozzo Gozzoli, sought out the leper, or took the likeness of the dying.

Now, in this long dark night of the spirit, that must end one day, we turn in memory to the dawn light upon the hills, of which Gianbellini was the master. In his painting of 'The Agony in the Garden', in the National Gallery, the miracle of the pure morning is to be seen, with the clouds that appear, this once, and never more again. The rounded hills are like the hills above Verona, but the slopes are in shadow. There is not light enough to see the vines. Hills, it may be, of the Valpolicella. But the Venetian is inspired by dawn upon the mainland, or terra firma. It is the sudden chill in which babes are born, and old persons die, when the

## *Buried in a frock coat*

sleeping put out a hand and pull up the coverlet upon themselves; when the smell of morning comes in at the window The figures in his paintings are of those who rise at four o'clock in the morning in the summer, and drink wine with water It is before the age of tobacco, tea and coffee, and the other poisons or narcotics We feel this difference in his pictures as we feel it in the works of no other painter It is before the drugs of the Occident and Orient had come in He paints with perfect eyesight, taste, and hearing, and lived to an extreme old age Our instinct tells us Botticelli did not live to be so old He had the diseases of the Renaissance in him Yet Bellini was no peasant, but the son and brother of great painters We see in him the predestination that we found in Bach An identical sanity and healthiness Other points of identity, as well, so that if we analyse, not the formal structure, nor the fugal language of Bach, but certain pieces from his Cantatas, we are reminded of such miracles of formal beauty and understanding as this painting of dawn that we are discussing, the Transfiguration in the Gallery at Naples, or the Baptism of Christ, with the Three Marias, in the church of Santa Corona, at Vicenza In his painting in San Tomà, at Venice, of the Madonna enthroned with angelic musicians at her feet, playing upon stringed instruments, like lutes or mandolines, we ask ourselves what music were they playing? No mere aimless strumming, but a music which returns upon itself, even in their infant hands And, again, in his five little paintings in the Accademia, which were done for the lid of a cassone, of Bacchus and Ariadne, of Allegories of Knowledge, Happiness, Truth, and Slander, we are reminded of lesser pieces of Bach To our mind, there is no connection whatever, spiritual or visual, between Bach and Albrecht Durer, but, in one mood of his universal genius, he has affinity with Gianbellini To the peasant, or more properly, artisan Madonnas of the Venetian painter, with their open countenance, and to the feeling of cloud and air that the flutes contrive in particular movements of the Cantatas

Are such felicities never again to tread upon earth? The answer lies in the truth that such things of beauty were, in themselves, ghostly or spiritual creations They did not exist, but to inspired and lifted minds Now we confound their survival, upon wooden panel, or printed upon paper, and in performance, with an actual existence in point of fact But their true life was only in the individual of genius who created them The music of Chopin was more individual to him than the frock coat that he wore, and was buried in, or than the clock and ornaments upon his mantelpiece More individual than his own physical body, of which it was the emanation Now, indeed, his music has become Chopin, and reproduces, faithfully, the traits of his health and personality, so that it can answer, nearly, to the physician's diagnosis Is this not true, equally, of Beethoven or Mozart, of Haydn or Domenico Scarlatti, of all painters, musicians, poets, there have ever been, and, did we care to follow it into those regions, of all generals, politicians, men of action, too? The spiritual and the physical are indissoluble, and it is their union that makes the soul. Thus survives, and is immortal It is possible, therefore, in this limited

## *'Ride a cock-horse'*

sense, to be in communion with the dead, for, in their effect upon posterity, they can even answer questions put to them. Nothing, in human affairs, is entirely original or spontaneous. Every creative spirit has his predecessor, every action has its precedent, good or evil. In one age or generation that is fulfilled which was attempted, and that failed, in other hands. But this has never been achieved without questioning and consultation of the dead.

Now, in the decay of all religions, but not of political creeds, is the time when we could find redemption in the example of what has been before. We have likened it to some dread personal loss, for it is, in fact, the recovery of lost peace and happiness. We have said that it can be mother, wife, or sweetheart, child, or lover, whichever would be missed the most. But, also, that it can transcend all things of person. It can be a whole world dying, albeit, with a teeming population of tens of millions, who are dumb, and know not what they want. We seek for the person, or personification, and shall be taken to her by a crowd of phantoms. But we must not look back. If we forget our promise, and look back into her face, she will be for ever taken from us.

Ah! but, in affection, there are two sorts of promises. And, in that sense, two kinds of love. One of them, known to all, but the other more nearly resembles that old dead woman in the street. There has been no name for this in antiquity, nor in our time. The two sorts of love are in confusion. But we would portray the one as a naked goddess, and the other as an old dead woman lying in her grave. But a woman who, in her time, had been young and beautiful. The winged child is emblem of them both, if only to the extent that every living person was once a babe held in its mother's arms, and that his messages carry, therefore, from the cradle to the grave. By merciful dispensation we think of the dead, when we remember them at all, as clothed with flesh. We do not, in morbid imagination, descend into the tomb with them. One day they are lying in soft linen sheets, but heavy footsteps sound along the passage. The hired men of the undertaker take possession of the body, and a day or two later the coffin is lowered into the newly dug ground. Into the brick-lined grave.

The thought of this, and what it means, may remind us, for it is our earliest memory, of when the big, old rocking horse was carried out into the garden. Not where there is a pavement of coloured marbles, so often wet with rain, but close by, upon the grass. By the box border of the flowerbed, which is drenched and heavy with the smell of stocks. Up against the stone wall of the house, by the red painted woodwork of the windows. Under a pair of bow-shaped balconies. Near to a dark and glittering holly tree. I suppose in the month of August. My mother, then thirty years old (I was her youngest child) stood very near to me, behind the rocking horse, which I was riding. It is a memory of nothing in particular. Nothing, indeed, at all. But of the awakening of affection. Of the first warmth of love. Of the safety and comfort of that emotion. By one of those curious and prophetic revelations, that do happen, to be remembered ever after, as though, in itself, it had carried me through up to this

## Portrait of *Andromache*

time In arms that could carry no heavier weight than that of a little child, perhaps not three years old With the long, pale hands that were beautiful, but useless, and which, in our time of utility, we may never see again, since they were a gentle anachronism, like the bound feet of the Chinese ladies In a fashion of dress that I remember very well, even though, so far as my memory is concerned it was the style of long ago. In the very first year of this century, or it may even be the summer before that, in the last year of the old In a blouse and skirt, but the front of the blouse and the cut of the skirt would seem old fashioned, now The sleeves, particularly. The dress was black, probably, or it may have been dark brown, for it made a contrast with the white dress of the old nurse, who had been my mother's nursemaid, and with the white sunshade that she held over me, of which I remember the ribbed dome, iridescent in that glaze of heat

When can it have been? On which day of the week, and at what hour of day? At some moment in the long summer afternoon But we will try to paint her portrait Tall and thin, and dark, and beautiful, with straight Grecian nose, small mouth, dark brown eyes, and little shell-like ear, set close to her head With a little head, also, and a straight, thin neck that was exquisite in its pose upon her shoulders She had a wonderful way of carrying herself, and thereby, an extraordinary distinction There was always something tragic in her appearance, which I felt deeply as a child, in spite of her gaiety and powers of mimicry which so much amused me In *Sacred and Profane Love*, with her in mind, I wrote 'The lonely goatherd is hiding from the lightning In his rough dialect he could tell you, by hearsay, of the wars: how Andromache, the widow of Hector, led by the hand her son Astyanax from the burning walls of Troy She was tall and dark and thin, dressed darkly, of erect carriage, walking painfully, with long thin arms and hands She went, her hand in his hand, or upon his curls, holding his head away that he might not see the flames And once, it was said, she looked back, when a ghostly trumpet rang from the parapet, and walked on'. I may have been thinking, in this, of the way in which she turned my face away, once, when we were driving in the street, in order that I should not see an accident, or I may have been reminded of her calm and dignity during, and after, the extraordinary and unlikely tragedy that befell her. I will mention that no more, except to say that tragedy seemed always to be inherent in her She was cast for that, and not for happiness In spite of which, my earliest memories are of how easily she laughed

Her character, when I first remember her, was compound of natural high spirits and a sort of palace-bred or aristocratic helplessness, as of one who was made with her brother and sisters to wear gloves, indoors, in order that they should have white hands, was scarcely allowed to put foot to the ground, and could not add up I would give anything—on a day, any day of her childhood, shall we say on a day in the 'seventies before she was ten years old—to have seen her in the hall of their house in Berkeley Square starting off for a drive with her governess, and by one of those anachronisms which are an utter impossibility, to have known that



THE ROCKING HORSE  
from an old snapshot





## *Lehar and Leo Fall*

the little girl, in the dress of children of that time, was to be my mother. To have known, also, I will admit, the vacuity of the remainder of that fashionable day, now as remote as the Pharaohs, and indeed, with fewer, or no relics. But my childish memories are of a human being, and of the love of a mother for her child, which, because it was primitive and missed anything that lay between, and because of her dark hair, and something in the way she held her body, could have been a Greek or Spanish peasant woman, though this was contradicted by her white hands and the oval of her face. A person, I believe and think, of exceptional appearance. Again, I have often wondered, if I had seen her when she was older, in fact beginning to be old, in one of the hotels abroad where most of her latter life was spent, what history and nationality I should have imagined for her, before I heard her speak, or knew her name. But, once more, I am carried back to the agonies of separation when I went back to school, made worse in the certainty that she would be miserable without me, for I have no doubt at all that she often thought of me, and am sure that in the first week or two of the term, when I cried secretly, she was crying too. Ah! I am thinking of 1906-7-8 and 9. In the reign of King Edward VII. The rounded curves of that immense, long gone prosperity are to be recognized in the dress of that time, in the shapes of their armchairs and lamps and tall flower-vases, in the waltzes of Lincke, Lehar, and Leo Fall. Who knows the waltz, 'Luna', by Lincke, which is a picture of women in big hats, somewhere outdoors under the trees upon a summer day, not in the country, but in the park, we should imagine, of Ischl, Marienbad, Homburg, Baden-Baden? I knew this waltz in Venice when I was a child, but I could tell, even then, that it was nothing Venetian, but Viennese. How well I remember the music of 'The Dollar Princess', and going to see it with my mother, who loved music as I do, any and all music, it mattered not what, so long as it was not by Johann Sebastian Bach! In 1924 I saw Leo Fall sitting at Florian's, in Venice, drinking a café viennois, and I could have gone up and spoken to him, with his round bullet head and his air of a military bandmaster. We were much affected, also, by the music of Puccini, which in early days meant Italy for me. I speak of when I was eight or ten years old. That, too, is the epoch, in its curves and opulence of feeling 'Il Bacio', of Arditi, used to make me cry, as also, 'Salut d'Amour' of Elgar, I am ashamed to say. But 'Songs my Mother taught me', by Dvořák, I place apart, as I think it is one of the most beautiful and moving songs in the world. Well do I remember it from that time, though it was many years later that I came to know it to be by Dvořák. How beautiful it is, when properly sung, with the orchestral accompaniment that was intended! Perhaps only someone of very humble origin could have written it. We should say that it is not sentimental like the German lieder. Teutonic music of that sort springs, always, from the middle classes. But this is out of the humble, whitewashed village, in Moravia, from the house where the father of Dvořák was a village butcher and innkeeper, and his mother, let us remind ourselves, had been a cook, or servant girl. His father came from a peasant family who had lived in this place for many

## *Blue Hungarian band*

centuries He played the zither and violin, and was a singer, too The music heard by Dvořák, as a child, consisted of Czech and Slovak folk dances and folk songs played by small bands of peasant amateurs, in the garden of the inn, or indoors during the winter And at village festivals and weddings This was his background The beginning phrase of 'Songs my Mother taught me', and the shadow phrase or repetition following, have always seemed to me to belong, by their shape, to the period that I remember The song is really, of course, a quarter of a century earlier in date, but perhaps the middle years of the reign of Franz Josef, his personal tragedies apart, were as much a time of prosperity for his dominions as were the opening years of this century, or the Edwardian era, in England But let us hear the song through from the beginning, with its orchestral setting It has a poignant opening, of universal meaning, which all can understand, but the nationality of the music becomes apparent in the slurring and fading of its close for, in fact, it is one of the 'Zigeuner-melodien', or 'Gypsy Songs' Then we hear the opening phrase of the song, and its echo, which seems to me, as I have said, to personify a certain time, or period of feeling What follows, rises up from within, which is to say that it is inspired But, before we know, this miraculous thing of beauty is over, for indeed, it is hardly a song at all, but, as its name suggests, a melody However, it comes again, more than ever the interpretation of a place, and time, and moment, so hackneyed and well known, but now, in its purity, never heard before, poignant and unbearable, and ending in a moment, with long drawn shaking and throbbing in the accompaniment, that dies away, but in the open air, giving the flavour of its nationality It is rare to hear music of popular or universal meaning, which is perfectly natural, and at the same time, in an idiom that is unfamiliar and strange But we cannot be mistaken in the beauty of this song And it carries with it the time and place of its environment, being brought to England, we should suppose, during the rage, here, for Dvořák's music before he was eclipsed by Tchaikowsky, and then again at a later date by the Blue Hungarian and suchlike bands who were lured to play in their appropriate costumes in the homes of the rich, and who performed the waltzes of Strauss and Lehar, under the palm trees, by the banked flowers from the greenhouse The leader or first violin of such bands came nearly always from Galatz, on the Danube, and the pieces they played were current in the cafés and restaurants of Vienna Therefore, the first memory of 'Songs my Mother taught me' comes, for myself, from a big country house in Lincolnshire where there were shooting parties for King Edward, and where I remember it, during Christmas, or so it seems to me, floating on an air of hothouse luxury that made a contrast with the frosty lawns outside, and with my own inner feelings It is, in fact, music which can make one ill from over familiarity, a fate which can befall it because it is so easy of appeal and comprehension, but which, heard anew and properly, becomes beautiful again, but can remind one, intimately, even painfully, of a place and person

Like many of the more wonderful creations of the human spirit it in-

## *Paris in 1909*

habits first one and then another personality of the drama. By the same token, in the plays of Shakespeare, in turn and impartially, he is in love with hero and with heroine. None of his plays are written, only, as though he is a man. The dramatist is a neuter being inhabiting each of his characters in turn. So, in 'Songs my Mother taught me', the meaning of the tune, or we could say the balance of its sentiment, alters from the bars of prelude which are the music remembered in childhood, to a poignancy which can only be the love of a mother for her child, different from all other kinds of love, and then becomes the all admiring love of a child for its mother, but in accents of long ago, as though remembered much later in life, and then is beautiful melody, pure and simple, ending strangely and unexpectedly in a wild idiom. It may be, as we have said, the curve or signature of this tune in date, making it to be from the time of our own childhood, for music steals slowly upon the conscience and in those days travelled for many years before it reached our shores, that gives to it a particular and personal meaning. Whenever we hear it we remember impressions and feelings, dresses, even, of that far-off time, and indeed, it holds for our ears the strength and weakness of that age. No other music, which is not light and trivial can recall it. I can remember, in a manner which is still formidable to my emotions, the times when my mother came down to school to see me, and our luncheons together in the hotel at Folkestone when I was no more than eight years old. O what I would give to remember in more detail still, for I was loved by her, and it has never happened to me again in life that every mouthful that I ate, and every moment that I breathed, were indescribable pain and ecstasy, both together, from the strength of my affections. I remember, too, as though it were yesterday, the appalling disappointment when I had hoped that I was going home from school in the middle of the summer term, because of an epidemic, and she came down to arrange about this, wearing a black and white dress in checks (this must have been in 1908), but the plan did not succeed, after all, and I was kept at Reigate through all the hated afternoons of 'nets' and cricket that I might have spent with her. In the following May, having been ill in Venice I was kept back from school, and remember the day or two that we spent in Paris upon the way home, in a hotel in the Rue de l'Arcade, somewhere, I think, between the Madeleine and the Rue Boissy d'Anglas. It was before the day of taxicabs. Being early summer, the drivers of the fiacres wore their white glazed bowler hats, while I was made to feel ill, almost, by the unbearable green of the trees along the boulevards that shaded the metal kiosks of the newspaper sellers. I was ill, too, from the excitement of the traffic, from what I thought to be the wilful ugliness of the lakes and islands in the Bois, and from the croissants and brioches for breakfast, but stimulated into interest by the shining breastplates of the Cuirassiers whom we saw riding past, and by the spectacle of the Algerian Zouaves in their baggy red trousers, white spats, and long skewer-like bayonets, on guard outside the Elysée. This last memory I know, now, to be inherited direct from the Second Empire, so important a feature are the Zouaves in all coloured views of

## 25 May

Paris of that date, on guard as I saw them, or strolling among the crinolined and tophatted crowds Upon the journey from Dover to London the lambs were playing in the fields, and again, all the way from King's Cross to Yorkshire, in a never ending ecstasy of the green meadows, but which saddened me because I knew, already, that it was a sort of childish happiness that passes, or is changed It became unbearable in the endless flat green fields, midway upon the journey A few days later, 25 May, it was my mother's fortieth birthday, and on the day before that, morning or afternoon, I cannot remember which, we went for a long drive into the country The red and white hawthorns were in blossom, and we may have gone eight or ten miles, through Seamer, and as far as Ganton, on land which had belonged to my grandfather, and may still have been my uncle's All the way I was utterly unhappy and miserable because of her coming birthday, so that it upsets me, now, when I think of it And, in fact, it is an occasion of terrible significance, for it is the end of youth This is the sort of festival that we should expect to find celebrated among some of those savage races of New Guinea or Melanesia whom modern scientific study has established as being possessed of a tribal culture and a spiritual life that have become extinct among ourselves The sad part of which investigation and acknowledgement is that, though they are our contemporaries, they are as far removed from us as if they had been dead for ten thousand years and they are, indeed, dying under our eyes from the contagion of our own ills But it is the passing of youth, and the change or metempsychosis of the affections Something similar to that which happens among the animals, the sadness of which I felt looking out on the green fields from the windows of the train They love and protect their young, but, by the turning of the leaf they have forgotten them, and are, themselves, forgotten Worse than that, we were, then, companions, and intellectually of an age That, of course, was a reason for our peculiar affection It would all change and I knew it The dark clouds even then, were massing upon her horizon In another year or two the sordid litigation would begin, which, in its culmination, while I was still at school and at the most sensitive time of childhood, did permanent injury to my nerves and made it so hard for me to face up to certain sides of life, besides fixing in my mind the appalling imagery of the Purgatorio, in the conclusion of my book *Dance of the Quick and the Dead* But of all this there was no sign, that day, beyond an unbearable poignancy in the spring air The larks were singing, and the lambs were jumping in the fields and running to their mothers, to whom they went by instinct Turning back, the blue sea lay in the distance, and I knew that this day was something that would never be again Her flowering time was drooping, drooping on the bough This I can only compare, remembering her love of gardenias, to the darkening of those petals, which are lovely, still, in their smooth texture and still keep the magic or intoxication of their scent Not for that night, only, but even for another day or two, and are beautiful, or have the signs of beauty, to the end But their youth has faded in them They are blemished Do flowers have this consciousness?

## Hay Brow

Certainly this person whom I loved felt the withering of her days of happiness. She had been married at seventeen, hardly six years older than I myself was then, and part of my unhappiness lay in thinking of her youth and childhood which I had not known. Could not have known, by physical impossibility, but this only made it to be more poignant. The sign of that was a large old musical box which stood upon a chest of drawers in my bedroom at my old home, at Remishaw, and which I knew to have been bought for her upon her honeymoon in Paris. It was of the sort that played by means of the spikes upon a metal roll revolving through the prongs of a steel comb. The *seguidilla* from *Carmen*, that sings of the ramparts of Seville, was the chief piece in its repertory, but I was, even then, a gramophone addict, and felt a sort of pitying affection at the thought of so old fashioned an instrument having been bought for the amusement of a young girl of seventeen. She can have been hardly older than I was myself, but in another generation. And she would tell me of her father, whom I never knew, and show me a pair of sleeve links which he had given her, with other things, perhaps a brooch or a tie pin, all of which had figures of monkeys upon them, in coloured enamels, and that ever since, because of this, have given the 'singeries' of Watteau and his pupils, Huet and Clermont, a particular and personal fascination for myself. I mean to the same degree that the pierrots upon the Scarborough sands have permanently influenced my taste in other ways.

But we had turned back, as I have said, and the blue sea lay far off in the distance, beyond Scalby and Burniston, with the Castle Hill shorn of its height and lying like a flat promontory into the ocean. To the left lay the racecourse and Lord Albert's tower, and below that, Forge Valley and the Raincliffe woods, so lovely a name, most Northern of woods in which the nightingale was used to sing, and fulfilling in high summer, when scented and all glistening with the wild garlic, the couplet of Alexander Pope in which he tells of 'lily-silvered vales, diffusing languor to the panting gales', his 'love-murmuring woods', in fact, of the dark nightingale. Far away in the distance, but in the same direction, lay Hay Brow where my father's mother lived during the summer, near Scalby with a garden that was a paradise of flowers. A long green walk with flowers on either side wound into the meadows, but chiefly I remember a mimosa growing in the open air upon the banks of a lake, glades of bamboos, and tropical vegetation which seemed, then, as luxuriant as are the famous gardens of the Quinta de Monserrate at Cintra, in Portugal. More vivid, still, is my memory of the smell and colour of the azaleas. But how can it be possible to indicate their colours? 'Orange-red, bright pink, shell-pink, salmon-red, or salmon-pink' of the florists' catalogues, tell us nothing. It so happens that their scent, which is more a pungency of peat and mountain streams, with the fallen, decaying leaves of the forest, conveys, somehow, a suggestion of the yellow-skinned Orient, where the monster-guarded pagodas are mosaic'd with little bits of mirror, in fact Burma, or the Shan States, and to see azaleas in flower, for the first time, by the shadowed waters is to be carried, even in childish ignorance, to a

## *The Virgins of the Rocks*

far-off, pungent Orient where the chewed betel spills blood upon the floor and the thin-spired pagoda gleams golden against the fragrant hill

But Hay Brow was distant and in another world to-day As was that July afternoon, in a previous summer, when we had driven there in a carriage, and I had that extraordinary and wonderful impression of the fields of clover, again with the sea in the distance; but ah! the warm smell of the clover, and high up, where the eyes could not follow it, the skylark singing in the blazing heat The leather, too, of the carriage seats, and the painted woodwork, both too hot to touch, the asphalt and the red brick buildings of Burniston Barracks, where, it seems to me, Volunteers in red coats were drilling, and so, behind the flowering cliffs to Hay Brow and its strawberries and cream, in a thatched roofed summer room where tea-scented roses hung down into the windows I remember the road that led to it from Scalby, towards the woods of Hackness, past a hedge of glittering holly Then, up a dark drive that held no promise of the garden But, already, I think, my grandmother had moved away and Hay Brow was in other hands It was in an altogether different atmosphere that we drove back through Seamer, where the Yorkshire wolds come to an end at Oliver's Mount, the flat topped hill looking down to Scarborough and the Bay I remember no more details My memories are all of the country inland from the sea, unfamiliar because it was 1909 and I had not often before been driven in a motor car How sad it is not even to remember whether it was morning, afternoon, or evening, when we returned! It seems to me we must have started in the morning, only for that short drive, but something tells me we came back in the afternoon No! no! Perhaps the poignancy of it was because so much had happened, or was ended, in that short time In his beautiful, but ridiculous novel, more poetry, in fact, than fiction, '*Vergine degli Rocche*', d'Annunzio tells us, in a passage that I only dimly remember, how his heroines drove back from the country with their carriage heaped and piled with flowers, boughs of white lilac, particularly, if I am correct, in emblem of their curious purity We, too, in all certainty, came back with a carriage full of flowers, but ah! that spring day had for us another and a different meaning She had lost her youth, and I, for myself, was losing my childhood

They are a pair of mutual influences that part, and can never be joined again For this reason their memory lies unburied It is a thing of which we could never rid ourselves nor would wish to One kind, or countenance, of the affections, but the other, too, dwells in the underworld among the shades What does it mean that we must not turn back? That if we forget our promises and look into her face, she will be for ever taken from us? Our promise is that the world shall never be rebuilt upon the pattern of what it was before It is too late, indeed, to rebuild it from the beginning But the arts that we have lost must be restored to us The love and beauty that are dead can be brought back upon earth Only, though, upon condition that we do not look behind until we have reached to the extremest borders of Hell Hence, the storm of our opening the Cliffs of Shieve League and the embarkation the evidence of the Three Wit-

## *A lock of hair*

nesses Dulle Griet with the fires behind and in front of her and our picture of San Antonio Abad riding out to meet the beggars In the Conquest of Tunis we prophesied, in July 1942, the battles that would take place in another year in North Africa and the Battle in the Steppe is not yet won We have given a portrait of a False Messiah and listened to the dulcimer or claquebois in the ghetto Two sorts of the divine gift in music have been studied and the countenance of God has been sought upon the mountains

We must not look back such is the implicit promise We can go down into the past, but must not wish for it to be again as it has been used to be We can descend among the shades in order to lead back this dead person among the living Upon condition that we do not look back into her face, or she will be for ever taken from us But this, again, is mutual longing This dead person, or personification, wishes to recover her lost happiness Her desire is to be youthful once more, or even that does not matter, so long as she may look upon the faces that she loved But the myth tells us that this dead person does not understand the condition upon which our promise has been made She does not know that the world has changed, even during her absence For she has not been dead for long It is the same earth, but in another summer or winter of the recurring seasons Or, indeed, it is humanity only that has altered The earth, itself, has not changed She will plead with us to look round, but we must not yield to her desire to see into our faces Not until we have led her back on earth, among the living

So, for the moment, we are among the fading photographs That may be the most fitting simile for those who are just dead For there is no other medium through which the passing of our contemporary time is so quickly seen We may look at a snapshot of five years ago, and wonder if it can be possible that it is ourselves More particularly, and this must be so since time is inexorable, in the case of women's clothes and fashions But it is the same when old clothes of a few years back are taken from the cupboard or out of a chest of drawers, while the shrinking of the material is but another part of the identical process of decay It can come to the point of sadness when, in looking upon what was, once, considered beautiful, and admired, it is equivalent to being shown the dead person lying on the bed Such are the relics that, in sentiment, we would not destroy We put them away, but never look at them They are, therefore, as inconsequential as the locks of hair in faded envelopes, which, originally, may have been cut with the scissors and given over as though they were something which would be, for ever, worn next to the heart, or laid beneath the pillow, but, now, are only pressed with other letters in the eternal darkness It is painful and tedious to bring them out into the light Once, it may be, upon a rainy day in a decade of years, when, indeed, it is too sad to read them through Too sad, and too remote, as well For the little child has grown into a man, it is a lock of hair of a dead person or of a woman who is dead to ourselves, who has gone out of our lives Even the postage stamp upon the envelope bears on it the effigy of a



## *Leptis Magna*

different reign, of another epoch, only a few years ago How flat old letters lie, for they have lost the imprint of the hand! Of the moment when the fingers folded them, while the ghosts of the written word went dry upon the blotting paper!

We cannot bring back the past And, if we could, we would not For this dead person has not been sleeping in a trance It is not just that she lies unconscious, and may open her eyes, look round, and speak The detectives do not sit by her bedside, notebook and pencil in hand, ready to take down what she has to say Nor is this The Sleeping Beauty of the fairy story Instead, it is the lost beauty and happiness of the four quarters of the world, of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America Who is there to deny this? Where, now, is the land of conscious happiness? The fires of Revolution have never brought that The fire scorches, but it does not warm The dog racing and the football pools will begin again With nothing more, or, indeed, much less Better, far, the bullfight with its blood and sand Or the Roſman games of the circus 'Blimey!' the cockney soldier says, as he stands in the ruins of Leptis Magna and looks up at sculptured capital and marble doorway Then he remembers the council houses and the local cinema But, at least, he lives in London, where soot and fog hide many wonders What would the Muscovite say of his liberty of speech? What would the 'mean white' of the United States consider him to be, who comes from an inland, industrial wilderness where even the brothel is in a motor-trailer, paying no rent, and moving at a moment's notice? What would the negro think, who works down in the diamond mines? What would the Spaniard, from the town of petrol tins? What would the men and women, starving, at the Piraeus? What would the Indian factory worker, huddled on the floor of his one-room tenement? The Jews who, like rooks taken in the high trees of their rookery, shiver in their black shreds or filaments, and are led along to dig the shallow graves? There, they are stripped naked, and it must be as if the black rooks are plucked, alive

The bootblack dodges the machine gun bullets, as the airmen come low 'to stir the pudding' 'We left the whole town seething, when the stumps were drawn, at the close of play' The rats and mice in one great army come up out of the cellars Blood, such as no savage ever dreamed of, flows in the cannibal islands, and cannot be stanchèd The airmen come down, on fire, into the ocean There are men on rafts, and women, who have been three months at sea, drifting from the sunken ship They are lifted on board, like living skeletons, having eaten a raw fish or two in their long, insane vigil The Himalayan vale is blasted to make a track for lorries The tracks of Behemoth are printed on the sands The handcuffed hostages are led out and shot Their food cards are taken away, and all marks of identity are removed from them The sealed trains shunt off into the night, down the one-track line into infinity

Was not the world old and evil, in the past? Yes! But it was infinite No one knew its ends The horror of this is that it is finite The whole population has been numbered, head by head All are assessed for taxation

## *Meeting on the Brenner*

and conscription. All, male and female, have been put into their category. Even the haunted room is so many feet of floor space. Come into the railway refreshment room, and for a symbol, behold the teacups fastened to the counter upon the ends of strings! How long is it since there were chained bibles in the churches? At the first opportunity we must take down the number plates and let the individual be himself again. The world must not be regimented. There are other purposes for human beings than that they should be mere fodder for the machines. Equal opportunity for all must not mean that there is, in reality, no opportunity at all. That none can be distinguished from the others. That the dead uniformity fits like a cap to every head.

The reign of the individual must be set up again. He should be as inviolable as the Brahman in his yellow robe. Or there will be no more blossoming. It is the massacre of the drones, the helots, peons, what you will. Not one will escape. All are to be killed, or made sterile. The huge, corporate machine will crush all in its maws. When they are released they will be powerless. There is this hope. That nothing, except death, can kill the individual. So long as it does not come again, and the spirit of the world is broken, which could happen easily, fatally, and it would be the end.

But the scene narrows. Is it not the concern of a few persons, only, and no more? The inarticulate masses will know no different. It may be that they are lost for ever. A few individuals, here and there, are all whom it affects. The rest have their sports and games. The artists, in all the arts, will be a few eccentrics. Not a dying race, but one of exceptional and rare occurrence. For it is impossible to suppress them. What we mourn, therefore, are the lost chances that the world might have been saved. But there is no hope of that in our lifetime, and we are driven in upon ourselves. Two wars have destroyed the opportunities. The new born babe lies in the shadow of the third war, that is to come, and that will be more horrible than all the others. That will not be short and sweet. It could last for a hundred years, and leave nothing after it. The toys of destruction have to be played with. The game is not yet over.

The tank is no different from the chariot of the Assyrian. The dictators drive past standing upright in their armoured car. The armoured train waits ready in the siding. The escort of fighters is hovering overhead. The vegetarian meal, served with a special non-alcoholic beer, is cooking in the kitchenette. Nobler, far nobler, the hon hunt of the Assyrian king with unguent-dropping beard in his shining chariot, javelin in hand, or with drawn bow and eagle quill about to twang. The gilded harness of his chariot horses. The hon and tawny honess, a few feet away, among the tamarisks. Yet he flayed his captives, and impaled them, and with his own hand put out their eyes.

It is the last chance, at the eleventh hour, and may never come again. The voice in the wilderness can speak from every hoarding, before the advertisements go up again. Before the slums and chain stores are rebuilt once more. Before the clock is wound up in the window of the Post Office.

### *'Your Murphy radio dealer'*

Was there always this drabness in quotidian life? It has been worse, and has been better That is the answer It was worse during the century of industrial fog Now the airs are lightened Better the cinema than the gin palace Better the omnibus than the tram

The nine Muses live in a row of council houses Could we say that a few of them are bigamously married to a man who keeps a bicycle and radio shop, who has insured their lives, but will presently murder them and claim the money? That is what has befallen the Muses, who were fond of solitude, and to whom the fountains of Parnassus, Helicon, and Pindus were, once, sacred The mother of Cho will identify her by a fragment of a letter in her handwriting Their murderer is a season ticket-holder who has put in much work upon the allotments, and is member of various friendly societies An 'old Contemptible' Mons and Dunkirk ribbon and bar He has been in trouble, too, at a previous address But the groves of the Muses are held, in perpetuity, by the National Trust, who issue a special appeal against litter and waste paper

No! no! it is too late For the dead are not restored to life The world that is making will have no space nor leisure for the Muses, except we lift our hands from the machines The temples of the Muses are the cinemas and dance halls I saw a shade from a semidetached maisonette, with share of own garage, under the pale oleander I saw the ghost of the stout woman who dropped down dead in the tram, among the other ghosts But not feeling comfortable, or entirely at her ease I saw the dead from the suburban cemeteries with white bouquets in their hands The murderer who was buried in quicklime, and the stillborn babe

It is the eleventh hour, and after We are approaching the climacteric To the big divide, or watershed, and it will decide which way the waters flow The sun is rising, for another day, until another night We do not feel the heat yet, but it will come This present darkness is not for ever Already we can see a little way in front of us, where it is still stony and precipitous But, in fact, the twilight is the greater danger It is the hour of hallucination, when the dawn is full of shadowy forms We hear the falling rain, but not the noise of waters But they are gathering Will they descend to East or West? Are these hills of iron, that the compass is so agitated? Are the streams discoloured? Do they flow a rusty red? Are they waters of the Orient or occidental waters that flow down into a stormy ocean? Or inland waters that never reach the sea?

We hear the preliminary grinding of the clockwork The golden cockerel is about to crow He depends on man He is domesticated He goes to roost at night Ceres, the goddess of corn and of harvests, comes to let him out in the early morning Or it could be the farmer's daughter But we hear the cockcrow Because it is a new dawn? Or because he was woken by thunder in the night? We all heard it And while he crows, near by, the night owl is hooting As though it is a cold and starlit night But we know different For the red 'flak' is rising, and Phaeton falls in his fiery chariot from the clouds In the fields upon the woods on to the roofs of houses into the empty ocean It is all the same Some nights we

## *Bitten by the serpent*

hear him, limping home, with halting engine, while the searchlights try to help him, and flares are lit upon the landing grounds Jupiter struck him with the thunderbolt, and he was hurled down from heaven In ten, or twenty, or in fifty places, in a single night Falling out of the clouds with screaming engine! Not dropping like a leaf, but drawn down, impelled by some fearful force to strike the earth Spinning down in flames, with a shrieking of the metal chariot, before disintegration Ah! we cannot rid our minds of the images of catastrophe For there will be many deaths Too many have been born Too many have to die Soon it will be time for another war memorial, but the same sculptor's pattern book will do for both Before you grow old, yourself, you will not know which war was which Humanity is like an epileptic who falls into the fire, and cannot learn his lesson, that he will be burned It begins in exaltation, but ends in weeping

For, in a sense, the whole world is in prison now Many will die, during imprisonment, and be buried in the prison precincts, on the battlefields, as well, or upon the empty seas Those who come back will be changed For all that was imperishable has become mortal One stone need not be left standing upon another stone Perhaps only the Great Pyramid of Egypt would prove indestructible! The lightnings and thunders, we know, are all that human skill and ingenuity can devise in the science of destruction The results have far surpassed all expectation The noise of Judgement Day is upon earth, a mock Day of Judgement, for it has mortal, and not immortal, values In life there is no appeal against its sentence The human race can be deluded, or inspired Deluded in their religions and in their wars, inspired in their resistance against tyranny Deluded, led to the slaughter, given promises for the further bank of death It is a trap baited with poison, for it leads them on to die We know no voice has ever spoken out of the grave There is no evidence at all Not one individual has ever returned There is no communication with the dead There can be communion with them, but only in the sense of meditation, and the asking of questions to which ourselves must find the answer To this extent we may go down into the underworld, and come back again

The myth of Orpheus tells how Eurydice was bitten by a serpent in the grass, and died of the poisoned wound, and there is a parallel, or an appropriateness, in this For our civilization kills those who grasp at it The world is dying of it, now, under our eyes So much of it is dead and poisoned, every day The contagion has spread from the white men to the other races The worst poisoned of all are those who have most copied us in all our follies, and have taken in so short a time from the bow and arrow to the tank and battleship This universal withering of all the arts of life is symptom of an ill world, and of the violence of its coming end It is so universal that it is personal to all human beings, without exception To the extent that it is a personal and private tragedy in the lives of all There is not a living being who is not suffering from it All are participant, as though they have lost the person most dear to them, or, in

## *Come back to life*

effect, the joys and pleasures that make life worth living, as distinct from pestilence and wars

Down among the dead men there is more pleasant company

The only true religions are the arts of men That is the only immortality All other is imaginary, and has no proof There are no Heaven and no Hell But there have been saints and prophets No one can deny that Nor that we can descend among the dead, and come up primed with instances There is this one chance to bring back the true religion It deludes with no promises that cannot be fulfilled It can restore the ancient magic, and the antique harmonies There were times when mankind was not condemned to wars But we have allowed our soul to die, and now we must search for it among the shades

To bring back the dead goddess or the Muses upon earth, it is not necessary to behave differently than we should to a dead person who has been wronged or injured We have to ask of her to be forgiven It is not too late It is never too late For we have allowed this ghost to die out of our lives Ah! how often has this happened It was so easy in its beginnings It came, imperceptibly, like a little wind that blew in through the window That shook the blind, all night through No more than that, all through the summer night Under the sweet smelling starlight, until morning And the next night, and the night following, and then every night, until the autumn Such was its beginning To be parted by nothing more substantial than the blowing of a little wind By the alternation of a mood By nothing more serious But the human heart blows hot and cold It is another entity from the mind and soul The hand, held in our hand, can turn cold The ghost, or spirit, can be killed It can die of inanition Wounds or bruises of the psyche are ill, too subtly, to be healed

Who is this person that is led to us by the crowd of shadows? For all must know her But she has grown older It is as when we meet someone, after long absence It is not like looking upon the face of a dead person She is not dead She is not forgotten But it is as though we see her again, without the intervening years We see her again, as at our first meeting, and this is an experience which will have occurred to so many persons in their dreams that it must be of universal and perennial truth for all It happens for no reason But it is a vision during imprisonment, while the world is old and ill

All have dreamt of such a meeting

Where shall it be? Upon the hilled banks of Lethe? But those are waters of oblivion, and we would not forget all that we have done, or seen or heard Or upon the summer asphalt that is too hot to tread? Outside the cinema?

But, in fact, it is a dream during imprisonment, with a melancholy awakening

Suddenly, after long years, for no reason None at all Like the blowing over of a page in a book that has dropped out of the hand

But we are brought face to face Not as though we went down into the tomb But at the end of the garden in the little wood Or in the passage,

## *The Castalian Spring*

shall we say, between two blocks of flats? In the shadow of the statue that has fallen on its side upon the sand? In the theatre? What does it matter! For our choice we would have laurels, myrtles, reeds and olives, in abundance, as upon Eurotas' bank, where naked Leda met the swan. So let it be. It is in Lacomia, where no one speaks, and we can listen to the birds.

We are in the underworld, among the shades, in the Elysian vale, and shall have a lot to tell of what is happening in the world. For who would not want to know? And, suddenly, we come face to face, while mudday sings upon the leaves. But we have to imagine that it is in a dream. For there is that tendency in a dream that the protagonists are ever young. But, indeed, the earth is still youthful, and it is humanity that is old and ill. In so short a time. Only in their beginning. Ah! there is all time in which to drink wisdom. There need be no hurry. But another year or two of thunder, and then the skies will clear. It will be clean and fresh after the storm. In the silence we may hear the voice of antique wisdom, not to be mistaken for the voice of God, for humanity is only to be saved by itself, alone, in the light of its follies and grandeurs, past, present, and to come. For a year, or ten years, but it must end one day. The glorious and sordid years are fading. The winds of peace will blow again. The beehive will be raised among the lilies.

It is the light of a golden morning.

Hark! hark! the flute is playing at the Pierian spring. We are treading a mountain that is sacred to the Muses. This is their home. They were born here, in shepherds' cabins on the steep hillside, looking down into the vale. There are nine magpies among the chestnut trees. They are the nine daughters of a rich man who challenged the Muses to a contest in music, in which they lost, and were changed into black and white birds to hop among the boughs.

In all antiquity the Muses, by whatever name, have lived upon a mountain. We might come, in the late evening, to a village inhabited by old men devoted to the study of the Classics. Here, poets would wish to retire for their old age. But, at the same time, another mountain of the Muses is trodden by adolescents looking for inspiration from the glittering leaf. It is holy ground, as sacred as the arbutus isle, and not as stony. For the mountain, indeed, is a meadow of thyme that you ascend slowly, listening to the bees.

Or the promised honeyhive has been set up among the lilies. Upon a hill that slopes with orchards, where the poet, like the bust of Herrick, stands in a swarm of golden bees. And the nymphs are milkmaids.

I have drunk the waters of the Castalian fountain, that were sacred to the Muses, under the Turkish plane trees that were planted by Agamemnon, so runs the legend. But the cypress! We must not forget the ilex and the cypress. The ilex is our predilection. The cypress has a stem as smooth as stone, and hot to the touch as the stone lion upon the terrace. The cypress could be purring in the sweet breath from the bean field. But we would sooner the ilex, for it glitters like armour hung upon the bough. Ghostly armour, not the panoply of war.

## Rock Sculpture

Ah! we shall see again the ilex and the orange tree, and feel the red-gold globes hanging from the dark green leaves And look down to a tideless sea As when I invoked the Muse, and she responded, among the vines and lemons

We hear strange music Not melody, for their music has no melody, but subtle counterpoint The polyphony of the sacred colleges, teaching music, dancing, and prostitution Music in the hundred, and more, modes of Aryan India Vedic India of the Upanishads The three classes of the population were Brahman, warrior, and husbandman But the ascetics have gone up into the flowery mountains The six pirates of 'The Flowery Land' were hung, at a time, in front of Newgate Prison Pierpoint and Ellis were the executioners But what we hear are the *gandharvas*, or celestial musicians, and we find the temptress, the *yakshini*, hanging from the bough

We see her from behind With hair, black as the lovely bee, spread out like the tail of a bird upon her shoulders, and the modelling of her head and neck seen through that, as through the bird's black wing Naked, the more so for her loin cloth, with legs lasciviously entwined as in a pose of dancing, with one arm upon the tree stem, and the other holding to the loaded branch Swinging from the tree in order to tempt us Dancing, as it were, under the stone fruits of the mango With the full lyre of her hips, body of clove or cinnamon, and bee-black hair She will drop from the bough and come, walking noiselessly toward us, very slight and small, like all dancers, and with a dancer's tread She comes up to us, with slipping loin cloth, and her wings of black hair spread out behind her ears

Not of the same race as the temple dancers of Angkor For she is under earlier influences Their hair is dressed into a tiara, a tower, or pagoda But this shines like a bird's wing upon her shoulder She will be lifted by the trunk of the elephant and put to ride upon his back, when he will lift his feet and dance to the swaying of her hips The dancers of Sanchi dance between the elephant and the mango tree Or we see another, balancing with her back and shoulders against the fruit tree, leaning her golden body outward, in invitation into the branches

Upon a stone relief from Mavalipuram, of the seventh century, there are panels of sculpture divided by pillars into sunk compartments Beyond this, in the distance, an elephant in stone, trunk to the ground, stands sentinel But the stone panels, of which there are a pair, show in the first, a king or warrior He is tall, with high headdress, and wears nothing but his armlets and a wreath of flowers One hand is on his hip The other, he places upon the edge of the stone panel and, leaning upon one foot, looks deep into the legend

It is the descent from heaven to earth of Ganges, the sacred river as given in the Bhagavata Purana, a rock sculpture covering an entire face of a cliff, and showing gods and ascetics, and the whole animal world, in adoration of the plunging waterfall, in which naked sirens and water nymphs are sporting The cliff of Ganga is but part of the sculptures of Mavalipuram It is an interior legend, like a crowded play, and the king

## *The antique magic*

or warrior has looked back into it, night and day, for twelve centuries, and not out into the world

A few inches away from him, and in the direction of his gaze, in the next panel, divided only by the width of the pillar, stand a pair of maidens. They are slighter than himself. Their eyes are on a level with his shoulder, and they are naked, except for tall headdresses in the pattern of their king or warrior. Their hair shows below this headdress, and falls, spiked with jasmine, to their shining shoulders. One maiden stands a little forward from the other, so that the curve of her left arm is seen in profile against the body of her companion, while that hand, which holds a flower, like the hand of Venus hides her virginity, and the whole attitude of her body, leaning forward, is conditioned by this pose in which she stands, with her other arm doubled, its elbow at her waist, and her hand bent back, its fingers touching lightly on her neck and shoulder. Her companion, a little obscured in beauty by this one who has edged herself forward into our gaze, half turns toward the king or warrior, but we feel that she is hidden from him by the stone lintel and the pilaster that lies between.

All three are as though listening. What do they hear? And what of ourselves?

We have gone past religions and philosophies. We will forget, and have forgotten, old wars. We will ignore the teeming millions. It is a lonely intoxication to listen to music under the immortal bough. That voice is the music that we loved, here on earth, and know now to be immortal. The more mortal, the more deathless its immortality. But deeper than all other, that sort portending everything, or nothing. We have given instances of the one kind and the other. Of the two schools of magic. The one, compound of instinct, and the other a heavenly science.

Come now! Listen to the old enchantment. The antique magic is in the air. The bird sings on the bough, for rich and poor. We hear music that we loved, not from the groves and lawns, but in our immortal minds. We have it in our minds and in our hands, in our hearts, and in what we surmise to be our souls, to listen for ever to that music, and obey its rules.





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